

DEVELOPMENT FOR PEACE EDUCATION

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CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS NOMINATED TO THE SENATE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

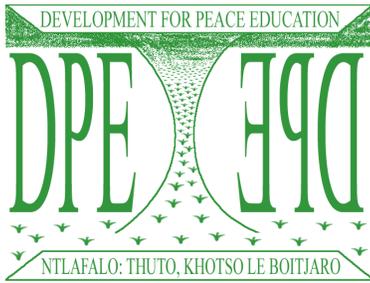
Basotho upraised in ovation to the King as the nomination of Senators was announced. What's so unique?

The King acting on the advice of the Council of State appointed 11 members of Senate of the parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho on the 2nd November 2022. This is the ordinary constitutional function after every election as the new government is being established. This time's nomination of senators was unique in many respects.

This kind of nomination comes after years of public outcry on the abuse of the Senate as a corridor to the cabinet for those who could either not make it through constituency or PR avenue or consummation of coalition deals. The heads of executive have been brandishing their influence in the Council of State to have their way which kept the worth of Senate ever declining. This was so because, even though skilled, the nominees had little if any time for Senate because of their preoccupation with cabinet responsibilities or other factors. The nomination of Senators had eventually erroneously appeared to many and unfortunately confirmed by some political analysts as a prerogative of the Prime Minister. This bad culture had eroded a practise where the King would also have opportunity to propose names which could be deliberated, agreed, or otherwise determined upon by the council of state. This has run for a quarter century but this year, was a real year of jubilee for His Majesty.

The names from different walks of life were proposed, deliberated upon, and assessed on among other criteria potential value a person may add. Precisely on that conduct, civil society names emerged and Seabata Motsamai, the Chief Executive Officer of Lesotho Council of NGOs and 'Mabataung Mokhathali of the Lesotho National Council of Women grilled and finally made it, thanks to the Council of State. 'Mawinnie Kanetsi, a veteran civil society practitioner now in business and other ventures in life was also nominated. In appreciation of meritocracy in the horizon, the public reaction is overwhelmingly positive.

Why this change? Could it be because The Rt Hon The Prime Minister knows and therefore decided to give Motsamai and Mokhathali positions to advance certain ends? This may not be responded to with precision, but the following could be instructional in engaging. The Section 55 of the Lesotho constitution provides that Senate shall be 22 principal chiefs and 11 members nominated by the King acting on the advice of the Council of State. The 14-member council consisting of prime minister, speaker, two judges, two members of opposition in the National Assembly based the numerical



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strength, principal chief, representative of law society, attorney general, commander, police commissioner, three people appointed by the King as advised by the prime minister. If the prime minister sees Senate positions as one of trade-offs in the negotiation of coalition or a political pay back facility, then the majority is clear. This has predominantly been the sad reality in the past decade and half. Clearly, Motsamai and Mokhathali featured and prominently so until they made it because the Section 55 was allowed to apply, it was not clutched. Clearly in this revolution of mindset, the influence of the prime minister to allow meritocracy contemplated in the Section 55 and indeed enshrined in the reforms to guide the advice to the King cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, the council freely and brilliantly advised the King to the satisfaction and benefit of the people.

Motsamai and Mokhathali carry the heavy mandate because it is upon their nomination that state recognises the role of non-state. At DPE these civil society representatives are congratulated and assured support. A very big round of applause to the council of state for making such a popular decision and having rendered a valuable advice to the King. Your Majesty, on our own behalf as DPE and on behalf of our colleagues in the sector, we salute. We further commit that this avenue shall be used effectively to enhance public participation, interaction between citizens and parliament and reinvigoration of the potency of the Senate as the review chamber.

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