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## **AFRICA DAY: LAW SOCIETY EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN AT ALLEGATIONS OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS AND TORTURE IN BOTSWANA**

On Africa Day, a day on which we as Africans seek to reaffirm our commitment to strive towards a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa, the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) expresses its grave concern at the alleged proliferation of torture and shootings of unarmed civilians by State security agents in Botswana.

'We have been alerted by our colleagues in Botswana that, since April last year, almost a dozen people have been killed in a dubious manner. We understand that the majority of incidents of torture and shootings that have led to injury and death appear to be perpetrated by State security agents who have no, or dubious credentials relating to policing and crime. In addition, we understand that human rights lawyers are being intimidated as they have represented some of the victims,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons, Thoba Poyo-Dlwati and Henri van Rooyen.

'Lawyers must be assured of having access to their clients. People who have been attacked and injured by the authorities must have access to their lawyers and must be permitted to pursue criminal charges against illegal arrest and harassment,' say Ms Poyo-Dlwati and Mr Van Rooyen.

The LSSA joins the Law Society of Botswana, the SADC Lawyers Association and other law societies in the region, in calling on the Government of Botswana to reassure its people unequivocally that it does not support torture and extra-judicial killings and that it remains committed to the rule of law that the people of Botswana are accustomed to. In addition, the authorities are urged to investigate and bring before a court of law the suspected perpetrators of the acts of torture, injury or death.

'Like our colleagues in Botswana, we wish to emphasize the need for crime fighting to be left to the police services. Human rights and the rule of law must remain the basis upon which our countries are governed if we are to achieve the aspirations of a peaceful and prosperous continent,' say Ms Poyo-Dlwati and Mr Van Rooyen.

### **ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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#### **Editor's note:**

Ms Thoba Poyo-Dlwati is the Co-Chairperson of the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA). She is also Deputy President of the SADC Lawyers Association, of which the LSSA is a member.

The LSSA brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 18 600 attorneys and 4 800 candidate attorneys.

In Afrikaans items, please refer to the 'Prokureursorde van Suid-Afrika'.