

## Media Statement

16 May 2023

### **Journalism continues to be a deadly profession in Southern Africa**

The killing of a prominent Lesotho journalist has sent shockwaves and heartbreak throughout the media industry in Lesotho. Ralikanelo Leqhashasha Joki was the host of Hlokoana La Tsela (I heard it from the grapevine) current affairs programme at Tsénolo FM and covered corruption, agriculture, and government. He was best known for his story back in 2021 about five politicians who were illegally trading alcohol. The killing is believed to be in connection with his work as a journalist.

Joki was [reportedly](#) gunned down in cold blood on Sunday, May 14, shortly after knocking off from his current affairs programme which runs from 6 to 9pm daily. As he was driving out of the Tsénolo FM premises, an unknown number of men ambushed him and shot him at least 13 times, killing him. Quoted in an article by Lesotho Times, following the shooting and death of Joki, Tsenolo station manager Mshengu Shabalala said, "...He lost control of the car as he tried to drive off which then skidded to the opposite of Tsénolo FM premises, where it hit the wall of Thamae Shopping Centre. Even then, the assassins continued to shoot at him to ensure that he was dead. He was declared dead by members of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) who were swift to respond to a call to the scene,"

The killing of Joki is another serious attack on media freedom and freedom of expression. The Campaign for Free Expression calls on the Lesotho Authorities to carry out investigations and prosecutions that bring journalist murderers to justice. It is often journalists who investigate and report on corruption that are targeted and killed, a lot of the time these crimes go unpunished.

We condemn the threats of violence and crimes against journalists for doing their job. In order to guarantee media freedom, free expression and access to information, impunity for crimes against journalists ought to come to an end. Journalism is not a crime; it is a fundamental cornerstone of freedom.

The killing of Joki creates a climate of fear in the media space, it impedes the free flow and circulation of information, ideas, and opinion. Lesotho authorities must thoroughly investigate the death of Joki, and the perpetrators must not go unpunished.

\*The Campaign for Free Expressions is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation that defends and promotes free expression for all across southern Africa.

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