

## **THE PLIGHT OF THE BASOTHO UNDER LOCKDOWN IN SOUTH AFRICA**

I am a reclamer who is not from South Africa, I am from Lesotho. In this lockdown of COVID-19 it is very hard for non-South Africans in so many ways. We are excluded from all things. The City of Johannesburg wants to offer work permits to reclaimers but only to South Africans. It's very disturbing and confusing because the work we do as reclaimers is the same, and we are all playing a major role in the economy of South Africa.

We are also denied access to food parcels. We were told the food parcels are only for people holding South Africa IDs. I was hoping every African is welcome in any country in the world, especially on the continent of Africa but COVID-19 has shown me that as a Mosotho my home is only Lesotho.

Some Basotho reclaimers are staying under bridges and in the bush because they have been kicked out of the houses they were staying in because they can't manage to pay the rent. There are people with chronic diseases, and they are not helped in health centres. They are told to produce the transfer letters from their countries at the health centres. The question is where and how can people get these letters when they are locked down here in South Africa?

This is very unfair. As Africans we always sing a song that says 'Africa Must Unite', but in which way or situations should we unite? Unity must be shown in every situation, but more especially in difficult times.

We call Lesotho our home – home sweet home, where there is peace and harmony – but in this difficult time of Coronavirus we have not received any assistance from the Lesotho government, not even food. We have many questions as Basothos living in South Africa to our government but unfortunately we can't reach them. The Lesotho government has forgotten that there are Lesotho nationals living in South Africa but during election times they bring buses to all nine provinces to collect Basotho to go home for free just to vote in the elections. But now in this hard time of COVID-19 they can't send medication or even mealie meal. The worst part is that the Lesotho Embassy and the Consulate are closed, and there is no one to assist. If you call their phone numbers it goes straight to voice mail, whereas they should be available to help their people.

Some Basotho have walked from South Africa to Lesotho saying that it's better to die at home than in other people's country where their families will not even get to see their bodies.

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