



Lesotho – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 21 June 2012

Lesotho: Information on the BCP, LCD and MD political parties – what their initial stand for, whether they suffered splits over last few years, their results in the latest elections, whether they are in government or in opposition, whether members and/or supporters of these parties have suffered politically-related violence recently.

A paper published by the *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa* refers to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) as follows:

“The Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) founded in 1952 as a nationalist movement by Ntsu Mokhehle. The party was later renamed the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) and recently, the Basotho Congress Party (BCP). In 1957 a group of royalist left the party to form the Marematlou Party, which five years later merged with Basutoland Freedom Party (BFP), a break away party from the BCP. The Catholic chiefs and teachers within the BCP moved away from the party to form the Basutoland National Party, (now Basotho National Party (BNP) because of the Mokhehle’s support and admiration for Red socialist China in order to counter the communist threat within the BCP. When the BCP lost the elections in 1965 to the Basotholand National Party (BNP), the then Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan and leader of BNP, responded by suspending the national constitution, arresting and then expelling the King Moshoeshoe II and banning opposition parties. The King was exiled in Holland but was later allowed to return and to contribute to the government of national reconciliation. This was partly a successful effort but was one fiercely resisted by the opposition party (BCP), which precipitated in a failed coup attempt resulting in many deaths within the BCP and the jailing or exile of the BCP leadership. Effectively, this was the beginning of the political stalemate and a *de facto* one party state in Lesotho.” (Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) (December 2003) *Democratic Consolidation and Political Parties in Lesotho (EISA Occasional Paper Number 15)*, p.7)

This paper also states:

“The unprocedural dismissal of Mokhehle as BCP party leader in February 1997 party conference led to the formation of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD).” (ibid)

See also an *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa* paper which states:

“On Monday, 9 July 1997, the Prime Minister convened a press conference on the grounds of the National Assembly and announced that he had formed a new party to be known as Lesotho Congress for Democracy.” (Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) (December 2005) *Investigating Intra-party Democracy in Lesotho: Focus on Basutoland Congress Party and Basotho National Party (EISA Occasional Paper Number 39)*, p.3)

This paper also states:

“This party was formed following a long-running dispute within the party concerning Mokhehle’s leadership. A few years later, the election of another NEC within the ruling LCD was to haunt the party yet again. On 14 September 2001 the party experienced yet another fragmentation... The two warring factions within LCD were now commonly known as ‘Lesiba’ (Feather), for the Deputy Prime Minister Kelebone Maope’s group who constituted the outgoing National Executive which lost the elections in January 2001 and ‘Sehlopha’ (Group), who belonged to the incoming National Executive Committee elected in the same contentious period.” (ibid, pp.3-4)

The 2007 *Freedom House* report on Lesotho states:

“Democratic elections in 1993, which resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), did not lead to stability. After violent military infighting, assassinations, and the suspension of constitutional rule in 1994, Letsie abdicated to allow his father’s reinstatement in 1995. He resumed the throne following the accidental death of his father in January 1996. Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle left the BCP in 1997 and started a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD).” (Freedom House (16 April 2007) *Freedom in the World - Lesotho (2007)*)

This report also states:

“Elections under this new system were held in 2002 and saw a turnout of 68 percent of eligible voters. The ruling LCD captured 57.7 percent of votes cast, winning 77 of 80 constituency seats; the Lesotho People’s Congress (LPC) took 1 seat; and two constituency elections failed. The BNP won 21 of the 40 seats chosen by proportional representation, while the National Independent Party (NIP) and the LPC garnered five each. Smaller parties won the remainder.” (ibid)

The 2012 *US Department of State* Background Note in a section titled “Government”, lists political parties in Lesotho as follows:

“Political parties: Democratic Congress (DC, newly formed in February 2012), Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), All Basotho Convention (ABC), Basotho National Party (BNP), Lesotho Peoples Congress (LPC), National Independent Party (NIP), Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), Lesotho Workers Party (LWP), Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP), Basotho Democratic National Party (BDNP), Basotho Batho Democratic Party (BBDP), Senkatana Party (SP), All Democratic Corporation (ADC), and African Unity Movement (AUM).” (US Department of State (Bureau of African Affairs) (6 March 2012) *Background Note: Lesotho*)

This report also states:

“Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle formed a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), and was followed by a majority of members of parliament (MPs), which enabled him to form a new government. The LCD won the general elections in 1998 under the leadership of Pakalitha Mosisili, who had succeeded Mokhehle as party leader.” (ibid)

This report refers to electoral victories for the LCD as follows:

“The new system retained the existing 80 elected Assembly seats, but added 40 seats to be filled on a proportional basis. Elections were held under this new system in May 2002, and the LCD won again. However, for the first time, due to the inclusion of proportional seats, opposition political parties won significant numbers of seats. The February 2007 elections resulted in another LCD victory.” (ibid)

An All Africa report on the May 2012 elections states:

“The new prime minister of Lesotho is thus likely to be Tom Thabane, a former foreign minister who is leader of the All Basotho Convention (ABC), which has 30 seats. The Lesotho Times reports that the ABC, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD, with 26 seats) and the Basotho National Party (BNP, with five seats), have signed an agreement on a coalition, which would guarantee the grouping 61 seats. The Times says the deal names Mothetjoa Metsing of the LCD as deputy prime minister. The LCD was in power until earlier this year, when Mosisili broke away from the party with most of its members of Parliament over a leadership dispute. The BNP ruled the country for 20 years from independence in 1966, suspending the constitution in 1970 when it appeared to be losing the first post-independence election.” (All Africa (4 June 2012) *Lesotho: Death Threats As Opposition Prepares for Power*)

See also an Independent Electoral Commission document which provides full details of seats won by each party in May 2012.

Information on the MD political party was not found among sources consulted by the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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