

**Lesotho Cases, 1970-2012**  
**Last Updated: 4 June 2019**

torg	gname	onset	min	max
T1790	LESOTHO LIBERATION ARMY (LLA)		1979	1988

I. LESOTHO LIBERATION ARMY (LLA)

Torg ID:

Min. Group Date: 1979

Max. Group Date: 1998

Onset: NA

Aliases: None

**Part 1. Bibliography**

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## **Part 2. Basic Coding**

Aliases: LLA

Group Formation: 1952 (BCP forms), 1974 (LLA forms)

Group End: 1993 (win democratic election)

## **Part 3. Narrative**

### **Group Formation**

The LLA is the armed wing of the BCP (Basuto Congress Party) and first comes to attention for a violent attack in 1979 (Schmid and Jongman 1988, 611; Pherudi 2001). The BCP initially formed in 1952 as a peaceful political party, but launched its campaign to overthrow the government in 1974 (Schmid and Jongman 1988, 611). The LLA formed as a response to the 1970 BNP (Basuto National Party) coup d'état which prevented the BCP from taking over the legislative majority in the newly non-racial country in 1974 (DADM Project n.d.; Pherudi 2010). The group aimed to destabilize the regime, as well as restore the 1966 constitution stipulating democratic rule. The BCP was a left-wing and pan-africanist party (Wellings 1990).

### **Geography**

The LLA's main goal was to destabilize the government of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan (BNP) of Lesotho. Throughout their years of operation, the LLA received support and training from the apartheid government of South Africa (RSA) in locations including: Pretoria, Vlakplaas; Dithotane, Qua-Qua; Lusikisik, Transkei; and Bergville, Natal (Pherudi 2001). Besides the help they received from the RSA, the LLA also periodically used external sanctuaries in Welkom and Clarence in the Free State of South Africa. The LLA conducted attacks primarily in the capital city of Lesotho (Maseru) and were also credited with attacks in: Makhoakhoeng, Butah-Buthe; Ongeluksnek; Qacha's Neck; Kolonyama; and Karakolo (Pherudi 2001; GTD Perpetrator 2372).

### **Organizational Structure**

The primary leader of the LLA was a man named Ntsu Mokhehle, a lifelong politician who became Prime Minister after the government of Lesotho was restored to democratic rule in the early 1990s (Stiff 1999). The LLA was, like its political wing (the BCP, Basuto Congress Party), primarily Protestant and, “a party of peasants and workers, particularly strong among the emerging trade unions” (Wellings 1990). As evidenced by their training and success, they were well funded through donations from the South African government (Pherudi 2001). No information could be found about group sizes.

### **External Ties**

The LLA was secretly supported by the South African government (RSA) (Pherudi 2001). The support came in the form of training, financing, logistical support, arms, and sanctuary (Pherudi 2001). Most of the money came from the Special Tasks Division of the Chief of Staff Intelligence in the South African Defense Forces (SADF), which invested heavily in LLA efforts to destabilize the Jonathan government (Pherudi 2001). Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan repeatedly accused the RSA of supporting the LLA, and, over time, the exposure of LLA’s South African connections resulted in splinter groups whose pan-african sentiments did not allow them to participate in a group actively colluding with the apartheid government (Pherudi 2001). These subgroups included the “Lesotho Settlement Army”, “Back to the Mountains”, “Mankapere tsa khaola”, “Lechabile”, and “Banna ba Thaba” (Pherudi 2001). The LLA was connected to the ANC through past personal relationships between Ntsu Mokhehle and ANC leaders like Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, but political differences created an intense rift between the two groups (Lissoni 2010). The BCP maintained close ties to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) after 1962 when PAC general secretary Potlako Kitchener Leballo arrived in Lesotho (Lissoni 2010).

### **Group Outcome**

The 1970 coup d’etat was a direct response by the government of Lesotho to the victory of the BCP in the 1970 election. The LLA framed themselves as the anti-Leabua Jonathan force, and targeted their attacks towards high level officials of his government. Leabua’s government was entirely unable to control increasing attacks from LLA fighters with South African support and planning. However, LLA tactics and behavior changed drastically when the BNP government was overthrown by the military in 1986, resulting in a collaborationist, pro-South African military government in Maseru. Their last attack was around 1986 prior to Lesotho coup (GTD 2017). The changed Lesothan relationship with apartheid South Africa meant that the support the LLA had enjoyed was cut off, and the group ceased operations (excluding an attack in 1988, that was most likely a splinter group using their name). The LLA was confirmed to be disbanded in 1993 by their former leader, then Prime Minister, Ntsu Mokhehle. The group had achieved the BCP’s aims, winning a majority in a democratic Lesotho (Pherudi 2001).