

INSTITUUT VIR EIETYDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat



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Insurance assessors head for Lesotho

HAZEL FRIEDMAN

Insurance underwriters and assessors have converged on ravaged Lesotho, to begin the arduous process of assessing damage estimated at millions of rands to predominantly South African, Asian and Indian businesses.

Insurance companies are treating the conflict in the mountain kingdom as a separate, special case and are attempting to reach consensus.

South African insurance companies registered in Lesotho and Lesotho firms have sought legal council as they are uncertain whether to define events since September 22 as political or criminal.

If the destruction is labelled political, claimants will not receive compensation unless they have taken out separate riot cover, along similar lines to the South African Special Riot Insurance Assistance (SASRIA).

Lawyer Steve Buys, who heads the cross-border Crisis Committee, has launched what he describes as the second phase of a plan of action to

assist victims, not only with claims but in re-establishing their businesses in the beleaguered country.

"We are currently trying to get statistics assessing the degree of damages. Our estimates put building damages at R43-million, equipment at R14-million and cash losses exceeding R2-million. Stock loss is around R56-million and monthly salaries at roughly R365 000."

Meanwhile the next round of talks between the Lesotho government, opposition parties and Southern African Development Community mediators was on Friday postponed from Monday to Wednesday.

Two rallies planned by the opposition alliance for Sunday prompted the move, said South African Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi, who heads the SADC team.

□ The Lesotho government has meanwhile stepped up security to protect expatriates, following threats against the expatriate community by an unknown grouping calling itself Matsekha. The threats were voiced in pamphlets distributed late last week.

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