



PSA 'extremely concerned' about safety of pupils, teachers

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Apart from an ongoing lack of resources and overcrowding, bullying and gangsterism are serious matters that require not only the Department of Basic Education's intervention but involvement by society at large.' File picture: Karen Sandison, African News Agency (ANA) The Public Servants Association (PSA) said it is "extremely concerned" about the safety of pupils and educators at most public schools where security is non-existent or inadequate. This comes after the recent chaos at Kagiso Secondary School, which saw an educator shooting and killing a knife-wielding attacker, while in another incident, a pupil was killed at Geluksdal Secondary School in Brakpan after an argument between pupils during school hours. In the Kagiso Secondary School incident, the attacker found his way to the school's principal, where he attempted to stab the principal. The attacker is said to have been accompanied by others who fled after hearing the gunshot. The PSA said it raises further concerns about the efficiency of security when armed strangers can easily enter a school yard without being detected. "Apart from an ongoing lack of resources and overcrowding, bullying and gangsterism are serious matters that require not only the Department of Basic Education's intervention but involvement by society at large," the PSA said. "While the focus is also an educator who brought a gun onto the school premises, whereas schools are supposed to be a gun-free and safe space for learners and educators, the reality is different. Educators are aware that their

environment is not safe and conducive, with realities of attacks by learners and members of the public.” The association said the department is not able to provide much-needed protection as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which places a legal burden and obligation on employers to provide a workplace that is safe and without risks to employees. The PSA encouraged communities to embrace schools as safe places to ensure an optimum environment for teaching and learning and better results for pupils. “It cannot be accepted that schools become places of violence and bullying, with parents and families not being sure that their loved ones will return. The provision of security officers at schools and metal detectors will also assist to improve security at schools,” the association said. The PSA further advised the government to consider using Expanded Public Works Programme workers to assist with access control at schools where the department and school governing bodies are failing to employ security guards....

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