

SARS and public service union at odds over wages, staff cuts

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Trade union the Public Servants Association said on Monday that it would refer its dispute with the South African Revenue Service to dispute resolution body the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration in March.

The union said it had given SARS its wage demands for annual increases, but the tax agency had shown no commitment to meeting these demands.

The union declared a dispute with SARS in January 2019 over the reduction of staff and wages.

The union's assistant general manager for collective bargaining, Ruben Maleka, told Fin24 that the PSA was the largest labour representative at the revenue collection agency.

"The PSA represents 5 241 employees in the bargaining unit. This represents almost 50% of the employees in the bargaining unit. Mediation at the CCMA is only scheduled for March 8; therefore PSA has not reduced its demands yet due to the CCMA process."

According to Maleka, the union's current wage demands include a 12% wage increase, an increase in long service awards, and the introduction of a "retirement exit gift".

The union has also made various demands with regard to leave benefits, including the introduction of a three-year cycle for family responsibility leave, increased study leave, an expanded definition for discretionary leave and the introduction of pre-natal and vaccination leave.

Maleka said the parties had already agreed that items would be further discussed by a task team, to be concluded within a specific time frame after the agreement was signed.

According to a statement from the union, its members have been overwhelmed by a system at SARS which created too many chiefs for the tax body to perform at its best.

"Whilst SARS has been filling posts in top management, employees who must ensure service delivery are negatively impacted by under-staffing, heavy workloads and uncertainty surrounding the wage negotiations," said PSA general manager Ivan Fredericks.

He said South African Airways, Eskom and the South African Broadcasting Corporation continued to receive financial bailouts, whereas SARS, a critical revenue collection tool for the economy, was struggling with under-staffing and outdated systems.

SARS spokesperson Sandile Memela could immediately respond to questions from Fin24.