

## Unemployed graduates turn to sit-in protests to get the government to respond calls of job opportunities



*In early April a group of 57 unemployed doctors who have completed their community service staged a sit-in at the KZN Department of Health headquarters in Pietermaritzburg demanding appointment letters. Picture: Supplied.*

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**As numbers of unemployment continue at an unabated rate with figures currently sitting at a soaring 7.9 million, Stats SA said the youth still remains vulnerable in the labour market.**

The fourth quarter of 2023 results show that the total number of unemployed youth increased by 87,000 to 4.7 million while there was a decrease of 97,000 in the number of employed youth to 5.9 million. ^

In an effort to mitigate the numbers, [unemployed graduates have adopted a radical approach by staging sit-in protests](#) outside respective government institutions to highlight frustrations over the lack of job opportunities and also demand to be added into the workforce.

Early this month, a group of 57 unemployed doctors demonstrated their plight by effecting a peaceful sit-in at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health's headquarters in Pietermaritzburg until they receive appointment letters.

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The efforts yielded results after the [health department advertised 120 posts](#) and the successful applicants will resume their duties on May 1, 2024.

Some posts were advertised in other provinces across the country.

[Unemployed pharmacists](#) have also joined the fray after feeling neglected and sidelined by the government.



Speaking to IOL, Thulile Zulu who studied at Rhodes University, said she completed her community service in December 2023 and has now joined hundreds of pharmacists who are in anguish over the lack of job opportunities.

Zulu who is KZN, said on Monday, they marched to their department and handed in a memorandum, she added that this was also done in other provinces.

“Our argument is how come there are [no posts for pharmacies released whereas doctors had positions](#) advertised after their sit-in?”

“We understand that in Limpopo only 50 posts were advertised for pharmacists, which is an unrealistic number compared to all the doctors posts.”

According to Zulu, she also applied for the post in Limpopo and was one of the 150 candidates who were shortlisted for interviews.

“Unfortunately I didn’t make the cut and honestly, I feel like it was fair to give the job to Limpopo pharmacists.

“But KZN has not even advertised a post for a large batch of pharmacists, instead, they advertised a post looking for one pharmacist, and we are a large number of unemployed pharmacists”.

“We want posts to be released, we are piling up as unemployed pharmacists post community service, the numbers go as far back as from 2019 until 2023. All those people are still unemployed and soon, they will be out of the Grade 1 scale going into Grade 2 with no experience besides internship and community service,” Zulu said.





sit-in outside the department.

“We have given them seven working days to respond and by April 24, we need a response. If we get a response and it's not what we were hoping for, we are planning to go ahead with camp-outs. These camp-outs will be done in KZN and Gauteng.

“It doesn't make sense, you employ almost 400 doctors across the country but there are not batch posts for pharmacists. As far as we know, all medical doctors prescribe for pharmacists. A pharmacy is an end point for every patient in every hospital and clinic, it's the last place patients go to before they exit the institution,” Zulu added.

On Thursday, the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (Denosa) announced that more than 200 unemployed nurses who completed their community service in June 2023 in the North West, will be staging a sit-in at the province's health department on April 22, 2024.

“Appointment letters were promised to the nurses before April 1 but that did not happen as institutions say they don't have the budget for the 2024/25 financial year. This means colleges and universities are producing nurses for the streets, and not for clinics and hospitals anymore,” said Denosa provincial secretary Mothusi Lebatle.





*Unemployed nurses in Kwazulu Natal. File Picture: Motshwari Mofokeng*

Meanwhile, the Public Servants Association (PSA) said it has noted with concern the continued practice by the Gauteng Department of Health, specifically in Johannesburg, of hiring Cuban doctors at extremely high salaries without justification.

“The Gauteng department has appointed doctors from Cuba at a rate of R14 million per annum. These monies could have been used to employ and pay South African doctors, especially in the country’s current economic state and unprecedented unemployment rate.

“This continued practice of “importing” doctors in from Cuba owing to an alleged agreement between South Africa and Cuba cannot be allowed to continue, especially when considering that South Africa can hardly provide employment to its own citizens,” said the PSA

In March, while answering questions in Parliament, Minister of Health Joe Phaahla said the problem in not employing more healthcare workers, was due to cuts by National Treasury.