

PSA Calls For Urgent Measures to Address Shortage of Detectives and Ensure Public Safety

The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), representing a significant number of employees of the Department of Police, is alarmed by recent revelations from the Minister of Police, highlighting a severe shortage of detectives in the South African Police Service (SAPS).

This shortage has resulted in many cases remaining unresolved, allowing criminals to evade justice. In response to recent parliamentary questions, the Minister disclosed that there are currently 22 413 detectives employed in the SAPS, which is more than 8 500 less than the established 31 007 positions. Between 1 October 2023 and 19 July 2024, 527 detectives voluntarily left the SAPS.

Alarming, the Minister has yet to outline what measures will be implemented to fill these vacancies and how remaining detectives will be incentivised to stay in the force. This high vacancy rate is a cause for national concern as it directly impacts the investigation of reported crimes. Detectives are overwhelmed with caseloads, resulting in cases going cold or never reaching the courts, leaving criminals free to continue terrorising communities.

The gravity of this situation is further underscored by the low conviction rates. In May 2024, The former Minister of Police revealed in a parliamentary response that more than 5.4 million case dockets were closed without results owing to insufficient evidence or leads since the 2018/19-financial year. This was attributed to the exodus of detectives in pursuit of better opportunities in the private sector, particularly those who are highly skilled in using modern technology and investigating complex cases such as online fraud.

The PSA is extremely concerned about the loss of skilled and experienced investigators, as this trend emboldens criminals. The PSA implores the Minister of Police to implement urgent measures to mitigate this exodus by developing a new model to incentivise detectives to be competitive with the private sector. The PSA is eager to engage with the Minister and other stakeholders to ensure that steps are taken to address this critical issue, which directly impacts on safety and security in South Africa.