

MEDIA RELEASE **Civitas Building: PSA threatens legal steps against Minister of Health**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has condemned the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, for failing to permanently relocate workers from the unsafe Civitas Building in Pretoria and is considering legal steps.

On 29 October 2018, the Chief Inspector of Labour in his report on the Civitas Building recommended the occupational medical assessment of employees stationed in the building, testing of electrical equipment, and fire extinguishers. He also recommended that no major construction should be undertaken while the building is occupied. None of these recommendations were implemented.

On 22 February 2019, the Minister resolved that the Department of Health would vacate Civitas Building permanently owing to prevailing conditions in the building that pose a threat to employees' health and safety. The Minister then called on all parties to abandon technical or legal arguments and concentrate on effecting the relocation. As part of the relocation process, a task team consisting of all parties was mandated to identify buildings to which the Department of Health could relocate. The task team had to develop a time timetable for the relocation, identify and recommend a transitional mechanism, and resolve any other issues pertaining to the stand-off on the relocation.

The PSA that represents the majority of affected employees, is disgruntled with the Minister of Health's continued failure to address a potential tragic situation. "To date, the Minister has failed to give effect to the relocation. The PSA subsequently on 17 April 2019 requested an urgent meeting with the Minister within seven days to discuss the collapse of the task team that was appointed to oversee the relocation. The Minister has blatantly ignored the PSA's request by not even acknowledging receipt of the Union's letter," said PSA General Manager, Ivan Fredericks.

On 2 May 2019, the PSA accompanied the Labour Inspector on a site visit at Civitas Building to establish whether the Department of Health had complied with recommendations. It was found that the Department of Labour's recommendations have been ignored in all aspects with major construction work being conducted in the still-occupied building. The Inspector undertook to submit his report by Monday, 6 May 2019.

"The PSA expects, that based on the findings, the Labour Inspector will issue prohibition notices and shut down the building. Should the Minister of Health again fail to comply, the PSA will exercise its rights and protect employees. Steps may include litigation against the Department of Health and the Minister in his personal capacity," said Mr Fredericks.

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