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| MEDIA RELEASE | Correctional Services: PSA extremely concerned about state of affairs |
| DATE | 29 March 2023 |
| EMBARGO | None |
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 13 000 employees of the Department of Correctional Service (DCS), is extremely concerned about recent reports of high-level corruption, understaffing at correctional centres, and rampant bribery of correctional officials by offenders.

It is well documented that the DCS is severely understaffed. This increases the burden on underpaid and overworked correctional officials. It further exposes these officials to offenders who take advantage of the understaffing of correctional centres. Correctional officials are at high risk of violent attacks as the DCS is not complying with the offender-official ratio as stipulated in the *White Paper on Corrections of South Africa*. This blatant disregard by the DCS of its own policies places officials safety at risk every day.

Recent revelations about the escape of the *Facebook* rapist, Thabo Bester, further confirm the rampant corruption and lack of accountability that are plaguing the DCS. Media reports allege that offenders are released to perform assassinations as then return to their cells, hiding the perfect crime. Should these revelations be correct, it is testament to the high level of corruption with political knowledge without the will to stop this scourge. Such actions defeat the purpose of why offenders were removed from society and prevents true rehabilitation from taking place.

The PSA calls on the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services to prioritise the safety of correctional officials through ensuring that the DCS is adequately resourced with staff and the equipment required to perform duties without placing employees' lives at additional risk. The PSA further calls on President Cyril Ramaphosa to urgently investigate the serious allegations of criminal acts being performed by offenders and the cooperation by senior officials in such activities.

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