MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19 corruption: PSA calls for precautionary suspension of implicated Eastern Cape Department of Health officials**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the level of corruption in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, where service providers dispute receiving contracts to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and other COVID-19 related services, despite appearing on the list of successful bidders. These companies are purported to have received millions of Rands.

It is deplorable that corrupt individuals can misuse the plight of citizens amidst the pandemic to enrich themselves and believe that there will be no consequence for such actions. The Wealth Heath Organisation (WHO) correctly articulated that corruption relating to PPE is murder.

It is further ironic that the Department, which is usually lethargic in dealing with procurement issues and monitoring of service providers to ensure successful conclusion of projects, could within a space of three months conclude contracts with more than 600 suppliers. The ability of officials to create ghost companies and process payment points at either collusion with management or the incompetence of managers who are approving these transactions.

This situation gives rise to great concern regarding the level of looting at the Eastern Cape Department of Health. There is clearly a need for a skills audit to determine the competence levels of those entrusted with the administration of state resources. The PSA is aware that an investigation by the Special Investigation Unit is underway, but the presence of those who masterminded this corruption will not contribute to an unhindered investigation. The PSA therefore calls for the immediately precautionary suspension of implicated officials.

Maladministration, abuse of power, and fraud are the enemies of good governance and cause government's failure to provide the required services to the people of the Eastern Cape. Seeing that corruption seems to be the order of the day at the Department, the PSA calls on the Premier to order a forensic audit to eliminate the rot in the Department.

END