

MEDIA RELEASE	COVID-19 Relief Fund corruption: PSA welcomes suspension of UIF senior management
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the audit findings by the Auditor-General on fraud and corruption pertaining to the Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) benefit. The Auditor-General had identified irregularities and discrepancies in the management of the relief funds. The UIF National Commissioner, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and the Head of Supply Chain Management were subsequently suspended with immediate effect.

These senior officials were entrusted to manage and oversee the management of the relief fund. The breaches of the TERS systems happened under their watch and therefore they should be held accountable. The PSA, as the majority Union at the Department of Employment and Labour, is appalled by the irregular expenses such as overpayments and inflated claims. The relief fund covered employees whose employers were not permitted to commence operations under Disaster Management Regulations and for employers who were unable to make alternative arrangements for vulnerable employees, such as working from home or taking special safety measures in terms of occupational health and safety protocols.

Employees who depended on those funds to support their families and sustain themselves over the COVID-19 lockdown period were not paid and instead students, deceased persons and public servants were wrongfully paid.

The PSA urges Minister of Employment and Labour, Thulas Nxesi, to speed up the forensic investigation to ensure that remedial actions are implemented against the offenders. The PSA also demands that criminal charges must be laid against the perpetrators and that law enforcement agencies recover all the monies gained wrongfully. The Department of Employment and Labour must note the shortcomings and risks identified by the Auditor General and urgently implement control measures in terms of the Treasury regulations and the *Public Finance Management Act*. The validation and verification of claims and payments should be enhanced.

The PSA maintains its support for the zero-tolerance to corruption and calls upon all South Africans to unite and report acts of corruption through the Anti-Corruption Hotline on 0800 701 701.

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