

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **Human Rights Day: PSA reminds government to uphold National Development Plan**

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Public servants play a crucial role in keeping South Africa afloat by ensuring that services are provided to communities, including healthcare, safety and security, and education, despite severe difficulties.

The Public Servants Association (PSA), as a major Union representing public-sector employees, is increasingly concerned about the general wellbeing of South Africans. In the wake of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, disabling loadshedding, infrastructure decay, unemployment, crime, service delivery failures, lacking occupational health and safety, as well as the soaring cost of living have a severe impact on citizens, including the mental health of the country.

The South African Constitution and other legislation, such as the *Labour Relations Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, safeguard workers' rights, also related to human rights. Public servants have to perform their duties despite crowded workspaces, broken equipment, failing systems, lacking water, sanitation and ventilation, harassment, and workplace bullying. In addition, they are not valued by their employer who refuses to grant salaries that are in line with economic needs and the value added by public servants. Filling public-service vacancies is critical to ensure services to citizens and support the aims of the National Development Plan (NDP), which will remain a pipe dream if the public service is not adequately resourced and funded.

The NDP, which aspired to create a thriving South African society in 20 years, was approved by Cabinet 11 years ago. The main objective of lowering inequality, unemployment, and poverty have not been achieved. Education, health, safety, security, economic growth and employment, skills development, infrastructure, rural development, human settlements, local government, environment, international relations, an efficient public sector, social protection, nation-building, and social cohesion were priority outcomes assigned to the NDP.

Whilst South Africans continue to struggle with unemployment, a faltering economy, corruption, and service delivery failures, compounded by water shortages, loadshedding, and deteriorating infrastructure, President Cyril Ramaphosa continues to make promises. The reality is that for the majority of South Africans, the cost of living is too high and is expected to rise. The crisis for public servants, in particular, continues to deepen. Their salaries amidst rising interest rates can no longer support their families' security. They are turned away by financial institutions as being "too poor" for loans but cannot access basic services such as housing and study assistance for their children as they are deemed "too rich."

On Human Rights Day 2023, the PSA appeals to government as custodian of human rights to uphold the rights of its employees in support of serving a despondent nation and rebuilding the economy and trust.

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