

MEDIA RELEASE: Office of the Public Protector: PSA concerned about conduct

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EMBARGO: None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has raised the Union's concern about impropriety at the Office of the Public Protector (OPP) with the Minister of State Security, Ms Ayanda Dlodlo.

The PSA has expressed concern about the Union's members and shop stewards at the OPP being victimised and mysteriously investigated by the State Security Agency (SSA). The OPP has also employed a large contingency of private attorneys to intimidate and victimise the Union's shop stewards on a daily basis. Laptops of shop stewards, containing confidential information related to members' grievances with the OPP have been confiscated. Confidential information related to politically-linked investigations was allegedly confiscated by these attorneys without any security clearance issued by the SSA and thus compromising the work of the OPP and the independence of matters before it.

Despite the PSA bringing these allegations (under the *Protected Disclosure Act*) to the attention of not only the Public Protector herself, but also to the President of South Africa, former Speaker, Baleka Mbete, and Auditor General, Kimi Mawetu, at the end of 2018, no response was received from any of these parties.

The allegations ranged from nepotism and irregularities in appointment processes, unfair or discriminatory treatment of employees and the Deputy Public Protector, to maladministration where internally policies are being flouted and unilateral changes made to such policies and thereby ignoring the processes of collective bargaining.

The PSA pointed out that it appears that for blowing the whistle on such improprieties, its shop stewards are being subjected to victimisation, intimidation and irregular investigations by the flouting of the OPP's internal policies and procedures. Employees are also being subjected to unlawful surveillance of their cell phones, telephone calls and laptops without any repercussions or reasons for such acts.

The PSA has called on the Public Protector to provide clarity on these serious allegations as the OPP is regarded as the custodian of protection against all such unlawful acts. The Union also appealed to President Ramaphosa to ensure that an urgent investigation be instituted at the OPP to assure South Africans of the integrity of this crucial Constitutional institution.

END

