

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA: Safety at Courts a concern**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing the majority of Prosecutors at the National Prosecuting Authority, has extended the Union's sincere condolences to the family and colleagues of Senior Prosecutor, Advocate Addelaid Ferreira-Watt who died on 18 November 2019 following an alleged accidental shooting at the Ixopo Regional Court in KwaZulu-Natal.

The PSA is extremely concerned about the safety of its members at Courts following the tragic incident where Advocate Ferreira-Watt lost her life when a loaded fire-arm, that was brought as evidence, was accidentally discharged at the Ixopo Regional Court.

The PSA pointed out that it is the duty of an employer to ensure the safety of employees and to provide a safe working environment. This includes how evidence should be handled during the execution of their duties. Although more information on the incident has not been released, the PSA is concerned that the safety protocol was clearly not adhered to in presenting a loaded weapon as evidence and that the *Fire Arms Act* was not adhered to. Such negligence has cost the life of a Prosecutor.

The continuous calls by the PSA for the employer to put measures in place to ensure the safety of its members at Courts following various incidents, seem to be falling on deaf ears. This ranges from incidents where a Prosecutor was stabbed in a Court and others were in the line of fire during an attempt to eliminate a witness. When the PSA tabled this matter as in item at the Bargaining Chamber previously, the NPA merely responded that it was a challenge as some of the buildings do not belong to the NPA. This is, however, no excuse to not ensure a safe working environment for NPA employees.

The PSA expressed the wish that the Union's calls for the safety of employees will receive urgent attention to prevent other tragedies from happening.

END