

**MEDIA RELEASE:** PSA alarmed at Departments' approach to employees' health and safety

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**EMBARGO:** None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is alarmed that the National Departments of Health and Public Works are focussing on gaining public sympathy rather than addressing the workplace health and safety of public servants stationed at Civitas building in Pretoria.

During a media briefing in last week, the Ministers of Health, Dr Aaron Motswaledi, and Public Works, Thulas Nxesi, insinuated that problems and an incident on 6 September 2018 at Civitas building could be a deliberate "acts of criminality" to sabotage the building to render it uninhabitable for workers.

According to the Department of Health, the Court interdict against the PSA was to ensure that employees who are willing to work in the building be allowed to do so without intimidation by other workers. It was stated that important functions by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority were behind owing to a resulting loss of productivity. Dr Motswaledi also described claims that the building is a death trap as sensationalist. He insisted that although there are challenges to be addressed, Public Works should take full responsibility.

The PSA successfully opposed the Department's interdict and the matter was referred to the Labour Court to be heard on 14 September 2018. "The PSA stands by its members who are no longer willing to put their lives in danger or compromise their health. The PSA attributes the loss of productivity to the poor working conditions in the building. As articulated in the High Court, employees are plagued by ill-health attributed by the conditions at work. It is unfortunate that the Minister of Health wants to gain public sympathy by implying that PSA members do not want to work and are preventing others from also doing. Services must be rendered but surely the Minister cannot expect workers to do so at the expense of their health and safety? A plan was agreed upon to address fixing the problems at Civitas. Why did the Departments not adhere to these?" questioned PSA General Manager, Ivan Fredericks.

"Reports by the National Institute for Occupational Health indicated that Civitas building does not comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and this was pronounced in court papers by the PSA. The PSA welcomes whatever investigation the two Departments wish to do to get to the bottom of the incident that occurred at Civitas building on 6 September 2018 but will not allow the Departments to use that incident to deflect attention from the major health and safety challenges the building and other government building have been presenting for years," said Mr Fredericks.

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