

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for intervention by Hawks following theft of equipment and food valued at R3 million at primary schools in Mpumalanga
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) urgently calls on the South African Police Service Provincial Commissioner in Mpumalanga and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) to immediately appoint a specialised task team to investigate a wave of school robberies near Hazyview.

Over a single weekend, Bamabanani Primary School, Endlunkulu Primary School, and Mdzimba Primary School were targeted, resulting in the theft of technology and food supplies with a combined value exceeding R3 million. At one of the affected schools, suspects bypassed security by cutting through perimeter fencing to access a storage room, escaping with some 58 laptops. These devices are essential tools for foundational learning in the Province where improving matric results is a priority for the Department of Basic Education. This theft effectively sabotaged the academic trajectory of learners before they even reach high school.

At Bamabanani Primary School, criminals stole food supplies earmarked for the National School Nutrition Programme. This scheme is a lifeline for many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who rely on these meals to concentrate on their studies. This theft will impact on the health and dignity of vulnerable learners.

The PSA is dismayed by reports that these schools were left without on-site security personnel. It is unacceptable that facilities housing such valuable equipment were left unguarded. Community members reported that an alarm was still sounding inside the locked premises shortly after the discovery, yet no arrests have been made. This security vacuum has turned schools into easy targets and the new epicentres of organised crime in the Hazyview and Marite regions. Given the sophisticated nature of these heists, including logistics required to move 58 laptops and bulk food supplies, the PSA believes these are the actions of an organised syndicate. The PSA demands that the Hawks take over this investigation to track illicit resale markets and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. Local station-level policing is no longer sufficient to curb this crisis. Educators cannot be expected to perform their duties in a climate of fear, nor learners be expected to excel when stripped of resources.

The PSA stands in solidarity with affected parents and educators, giving the Provincial Commissioner and the Department of Education a clear mandate to secure schools in the interest of learners' future.

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