

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls on Portfolio Committee of Correctional Services to engage National Treasury for urgent funding for critical staffing needs
DATE	5 February 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing thousands of employees of the Department of Correctional Services, is alarmed by the recent briefing delivered by the National Commissioner regarding the escalating crisis in South Africa's correctional facilities.

The Commissioner's report revealed that the inmate population surged to 170 739 over the festive season against a system capacity of 107 067. This confirms the PSA's continuous warnings to the DCS that chronic understaffing and overcrowding are pushing correctional centres into a state of severe instability. These conditions compromise the safety of officials and inmates and undermines the Department's constitutional mandate.

Recent violent incidents highlighted in the briefing include the stabbing of six Correctional officials, and serious operational lapses such as the mistaken release of an inmate in the Western Cape and underscore the gravity of the situation. These events are symptomatic of an exhausted workforce struggling under impossible conditions, exacerbated by inadequate staffing levels, infrastructure strain, and growing security risks. The PSA is further concerned about the Department's impending takeover of operations at Mangaung Correctional Centre. Whilst the PSA supports the return of privately managed facilities to direct state control, this transition cannot succeed without the necessary human and financial resources. Adding an additional large-scale centre to an already depleted staff complement will further compromise the safety and functioning of the correctional system.

The PSA calls on the Portfolio Committee of the Department of Correctional Services to urgently engage the Minister of Finance to ensure that sufficient budget allocations are made available for the recruitment and deployment of core correctional staff. During engagements with the Department on the staff shortage, it indicated that it did not have enough funding to satisfy the inmate/member ratio and the growing prison population. This calls for urgent intervention by the Portfolio Committee and the National Treasury. Without dedicated funding for critical posts, the DCS will remain unable to stabilise operations, safeguard officials, or ensure a secure correctional environment.



Investing in adequate staffing is essential to protecting lives, maintaining security, and restoring the integrity of South Africa's correctional institutions. The PSA urges the Portfolio Committee to impress on the National Treasury to prioritise this matter in the upcoming budget cycle and to work jointly with the Department to formulate a sustainable staffing and safety strategy. The PSA is committed to defending the rights, safety, and wellbeing of Correctional officials and will continue to hold government accountable for providing the resources necessary to ensure safe and functional correctional facilities.

END

