

MEDIA RELEASE: PSA concerned about high number of prolonged suspensions in Public Service

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 240 000 public servants in the Public Service, is appalled by the response by the Minister of Public Service and Administration, Mr Senzo Mchunu, to a question in Parliament relating to the high number of suspensions in the Public Service.

Despite being equally concerned about the fruitless expenditure of R17 million incurred on some 280 suspensions across the broader Public Service, the PSA believes that these prolonged suspensions are a direct infringement on the labour rights of the officials involved. There is a collective agreement, in the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) that governs suspensions. The agreement provides for the suspension of officials for a month or 60 days, depending on the complexity of the matter, to allow the employer to investigate charges and to convene a disciplinary hearing, if required. Where the 60 days are not enough to finalise an investigation, the employer must request an appointed presiding officer for an extension. A similar provision can be found in the *Senior Management Services Handbook* that governs employment policies for Senior Managers in the Public Service.

The PSA has found that in most cases, investigations are not concluded owing to the inherent inability of departments to conduct proper investigations on their own, waiting on associated criminal investigations and trails to be concluded, which may take up to three years or even longer. Not only do these prolonged suspensions disrupt the effective functioning of a department, it also has an extremely negative affect on the wellbeing of employees involved and their families, whilst the remaining officials are overburdened with additional duties.

The PSA regards such prolonged suspensions as inherent unfair labour practises and will assist members who may be faced with such suspensions. The PSA also calls on Minister Mchunu to act decisively and rescind all these prolonged suspensions as well as the frivolous litigation processes in reviewing most awards issued against the employer.

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