

MEDIA RELEASE

PSA concerned about upliftment of prohibition order at Mbombela High Court

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EMBARGO

None

ENQUIRIES

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the recent decision to uplift the prohibition order issued by the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) for the Mbombela High Court in Mpumalanga.

The prohibition order was issued owing to serious occupational health and safety (OHS) shortcomings. The Department of Justice (DOJ)/Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ) later submitted a request to defer the order to the DEL and the inspector responsible for its issuance. After a thorough review, the DEL determined on 4 November 2024 that the reasons provided were insufficient, and compliance with the order remained necessary.

The PSA has established that since the onset of COVID-19, civil cases have primarily been conducted virtually. Currently, only four out of twelve courts are operational owing to persistent issues with recording equipment, which is still not fully functional.

A meeting involving the PSA, the DEL, and other stakeholders was held in December 2024, where the inspector granted the DOJ 60 days to rectify the identified OHS deficiencies. The DOJ, however, failed to meet this deadline. Despite this non-compliance, during another meeting on 26 February 2025, the DEL proceeded with uplifting the prohibition order, with the DOJ required to submit a remedial action plan.

The PSA remains extremely concerned about the decision, given the ongoing hazards in the building. Currently, only one of the four lifts is operational. A female employee recently endured severe trauma after being trapped in a malfunctioning lift for nearly three hours. Additionally, the building continues to experience structural issues, including a leaking roof, poor ventilation in central offices, and broken ceilings in judicial chambers. Furthermore, no occupation certificate has been issued permitting the DOJ's use of the building.

The PSA is aware of undue political influence exerted on the inspector to revoke the order. In response, the PSA will escalate the matter to the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, urging an inspection of the High Court building, similar to his review of the Independent Development Trust, which was involved in the Court's development. The PSA will also appeal to the Chief Labour Inspector for the appointment of a senior inspector to conduct a thorough reassessment of the building's compliance with OHS regulations.

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