

MEDIA RELEASE PSA demands accountability at Department of Home Affairs in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the gross negligence displayed by the Department of Home Affairs, resulting in employees at the Emalahleni Office in Mpumalanga working under inhumane and unlawful conditions.

For months, these employees were forced to endure freezing temperatures inside the building because of broken air-conditioning units, whilst management ignored repeated pleas for urgent intervention. This shocking neglect placed employees' lives at risk. Exposure to such extreme cold is not a minor inconvenience and triggers respiratory infections, worsens arthritis, and weakens immune systems. For employees with pre-existing conditions, it amounted to a direct assault on their health. This is an indictment on government's priorities and its blatant disregard for employees' safety.

Following sustained pressure by the PSA, the Department has finally confirmed that remedial work is underway at the Emalahleni Office. The project includes repairing air-conditioning, replacing ceilings, installing new windows and blinds, replacing carpets, maintaining water tanks, and addressing long-ignored occupational health and safety risks.

Whilst this reflects progress, it exposes a pattern whereby government only acts when pushed and embarrassed by unions, rather than out of responsibility or care for its employees. The PSA demands more than piecemeal repairs. The Minister of Home Affairs and the Premier of Mpumalanga must, within 14 days, provide a public explanation on why employees were subjected to these appalling conditions, and outline concrete measures to prevent such neglect across all government offices. Failure to respond will confirm an abuse of employees and an inability to guarantee the most basic rights of public servants.

The PSA warns that this is not an isolated case. Across Mpumalanga, employees continue to face collapsing infrastructure, unsafe workplaces, and indifference by management. The PSA will not allow the health and dignity of public servants to be treated as expendable. Should government fail to meet its obligations, the PSA will escalate its response through legal action, mass mobilisation, and exposure of those responsible. Employees are not second-class citizens. Government must respect and protect its employees or face the full force of organised labour.

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