

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA extremely concerned regarding safety of employees at Refugee Centres, including Durban Centre Refugee Reception Centre in KwaZulu-Natal
DATE	22 October 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) condemns the continued failure by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to demonstrate responsibility for the safety, well-being, and dignity of employees, particularly those stationed at the Durban Refugee Reception Centre (RRC) in KwaZulu-Natal.

The PSA is by the DHA's apparent indifference to serious and credible threats faced by employees. Employees are openly expressing fears of intimidation, victimisation, assault, and even loss of life arising from the volatile environment surrounding the Durban RRC. The DHA's response has been limited to administrative and procedural measures that do little to remove actual risks confronting employees daily.

Employees have repeatedly made it clear that their concerns extend beyond the confines of the workplace. They fear being identified, followed, attacked, or targeted whilst travelling to and from work or in their communities. The DHA continues to advance measures that merely monitor risks rather than eliminate these. Reliance on security assessments, SA Police Service visibility at the workplace, and post-incident compensation mechanisms reflect a mindset focused on managing consequences rather than preventing harm. The PSA rejects the notion that employees are expected to choose between preserving their livelihoods and protecting their lives. Employees should be compelled to report for duty when legitimate threats to their safety remain unresolved. An employer's duty extends beyond ensuring operational continuity. There is a legal and moral obligation to provide a working environment that is safe and without risk to employees as far as reasonably practicable.

The DHA's current approach creates the impression that service-delivery considerations are prioritised above employees' constitutional right to life, security of person, dignity, and a safe working environment. The PSA regards this unacceptable and urges the DHA's Director-General and senior management to demonstrate leadership and compassion by granting immediate special leave to affected employees, implementing alternative work arrangements or temporary relocation of staff, and conducting an independent, comprehensive security-risk assessment. Temporary closure or relocation of services where employee safety cannot be reasonably guaranteed should be considered. Meaningful consultation with organised labour is required on all decisions affecting employee safety.

No operational objective can justify exposing employees to situations where they fear for their lives. The DHA must move beyond rhetoric and take decisive action that places the safety of employees ahead of administrative convenience. The measure of an employer is not how it responds after tragedy strikes, but what it does to prevent tragedy. The DHA must urgently decide whether it stands with employees or continues to disregard their legitimate cries for protection.

END

