

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA serves notice of strike action**

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Members of the Public Servants Association (PSA) are geared to commence with industrial action after government's failure to conclude an agreement on protracted salary negotiations for the Public Service.

The Union's members mandated the rejection of a ridiculous and problematic offer where workers would potentially lose some R1 000 of their monthly income, leaving the PSA no choice but to embark on industrial action. The PSA could not agree to a salary decrease for workers in view of uncertainty regarding the continuation of the cash gratuity beyond 31 March 2023. Even the offered 3%-salary adjustment did not meet the expectation of the Union's members, owing to steep price increases for basic necessities such as petrol, food, electricity as well as interest rates increases. The situation was worsened by government's failure to afford workers a real salary increase for three successive years, resulting in stagnant salaries.

The PSA thus filed the notice to strike on 24 October 2022 after exhausting all options possible to resolve the wage negotiation impasse and hitting a brick wall owing to government's arrogance and disregard of workers' plight throughout the negotiations. Effectively, the PSA's members will have the right to strike seven days after filing the notice. The strike could not be avoided as, despite all attempts by the PSA together with other unions to demonstrate a willingness to negotiate, the employer failed to cooperate. The PSA's members, after considering the events, voted in favour of strike action as they realised that all other options were exhausted. Their commitment to service delivery, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, was "rewarded" with the tabling of a 0%-salary increase offer.

The narrative by government that public-sector employees earn lucrative salaries and are greedy, is misplaced as it includes state-owned entities, where salaries are above those of Public Service employees. Even municipal workers are on higher salary scales when compared to national and provincial government department employees. Public Service employees have been the scapegoats for endless corruption. In addition, they work in dilapidated and unsafe buildings, endure chronic and excessive staff shortages, lack basic working tools, are insulted and attacked by the public for poor service, whilst experiencing a lack of career mobility and advancement owing to the deployment of unqualified cadres. The Public Service, its employees, and citizens have been bleeding since the introduction of austerity measures by a cruel, uncaring government that refuses to acknowledge realities.

The PSA remains committed to protect and promote the rights and interests of public servants, achieved through collective bargaining.

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