

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA urges South African Police Service to partner with institutions with forensic capacities amidst massive DNA case backlog
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), representing a significant number of police officers and civilian employees of the South African Police Service (SAPS), is disturbed by the reported backlog of more than 140 000 DNA samples.

The SAPS reported to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Police about this crisis situation where the backlog has spiralled out of control. The failure by SAPS to speedily process DNA samples hampers the efficiency of the justice system as many criminal cases may be withdrawn from the roll owing to a lack of evidence. Victims would be denied their right to justice as perpetrators would go unpunished and continue posing a threat to citizens. This failure further has a direct impact on combatting gender-based violence, which is highly disturbing.

The PSA has called for the capacitation of the SAPS Forensic Laboratory Division owing to ongoing inadequacy and incapacities to deal with work challenges. Despite obvious needs to employ more human resources, the PSA advised the SAPS to forge partnerships with institutions of higher learning with forensic capabilities. In a country with astronomic and unacceptable crime rates, no stone must be left unturned to address this embarrassing challenge. Engagement with private sector should thus be promptly explored. The PSA further recommended re-enlisting former employees and decentralisation of this service as the centralised approach has proven to be failing.

The PSA's repeated advice and recommendations were, however, ignored showing a complete disregard for the crisis and an unwillingness by the SAPS to address this challenge. The crisis deepened despite various interventions and reprioritisation of funding to resolve the backlog. This can again be attributed to an unwillingness to resolve the challenge as well as negligence and incompetence by those entrusted with the responsibility of managing this important function.

The PSA therefore calls for immediate collaboration between the SAPS and institutions of higher learning and the private sector to address the backlog as a short-term solution. In addition, to service should be decentralised and adequate and qualified employees should be appointed. Failure to respond and address this crisis undermines the constitutionally entrenched rights to equality, fair administrative action, and access to courts, leaving citizens to fend for themselves whilst perpetrators continue to enjoy undeserved freedom.

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