

MEDIA RELEASE PSA urges urgent cyber security overhaul in public sector after Stats SA breach

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is deeply concerned by the confirmed cyber security breach at Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), which resulted in unauthorised access to the agency’s Human Resources (HR) database used for online job applications. Stats SA has acknowledged that the breach compromised data contained in the HR system and forms part of a growing pattern of cyber attacks targeting public institutions.

The PSA views this breach as a serious warning about the vulnerability of government systems, particularly those hosting sensitive personal information of citizens and job seekers. The growing incidence of targeted attacks against public-sector digital infrastructure demonstrates the urgent need for a comprehensive cyber security overhaul across all government departments. The citizens are placed at risk of identity theft, fraud and misuse of personal information.

Reports indicate that a cybercrime group known as XP95 has claimed responsibility for the attack, alleging the theft of over 154GB of data and demanding a ransom of \$100,000 (R1.7 million). Stats SA has confirmed it will not pay the ransom and will follow legal processes outlined by the Information Regulator and the *Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)*. They claim to have stolen over 450 000 files, about 154 GB of data. Cyber security experts have highlighted that repeated breaches across government entities reflect long standing weaknesses in outdated systems, inadequate patching, and insufficient safeguards. The PSA strongly urges government to prioritise modernising digital infrastructure, strengthening monitoring and detection capabilities, and ensuring that all departments adopt robust, standardised cyber security frameworks.

The PSA further calls for urgent investment in training public-sector employees on cyber hygiene, full enforcement of consequence management measures, and the establishment of a coordinated national cyber security response unit. A coordinated national cyber security strategy must be developed as a matter of urgency.

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