

MEDIA RELEASE: **PSA warns Government: Unions will not be silenced during Lockdown**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 240 000 public servants welcomes the decision by the Minister for Public Service and Administration, to have the Public Service Commission (PSC) operating during level-4 lockdown, as it gives employees an avenue, during this period, to have a balance at work and have their grievances heard. The mental health of public servants is of the utmost importance during this time and it is essential for them to have a platform to raise their grievances.

As this period requires extra ordinary measures in terms of employment and is uncharted waters for all, it is important to ensure that a platform is provided for issues to be resolved calmly and responsibly to ensure that the public gets the service it requires during this period and that there is labour peace. The rights of workers to be protected during this time, is just as important in combating the virus, and their rights in terms of the Constitution should still be maintained and respected. The PSA is surprised that these sentiments are not shared by all such institutions and that there is a delay in issuing unions with a directive to operate as required in terms of the amended Regulations.

Bargaining Councils in the Public Service are equally prevented from performing their functions to ensure social justice and to avoid disputes and protest action. If the CCMA, the Courts, and the PSC are permitted to operate, then why is government as an employer, preventing institutions established to resolve, manage, and avoid conflict in the workplace to operate. This conduct is indeed questionable. Government should be reminded that justice delayed is justice denied and whilst these institutions are still prevented from operating, it will not deter labour, especially the PSA, in finding any alternative avenues, to represent its members interests and protect their rights. Government is warned that trade unions, such as the PSA in the Public Service, will not be eroded or silenced. We are here to stay and the face of engagement in the Public Service will not be changed to advance the employer only.

The PSA urges government to permit all institutions such as the Bargaining Councils, similar as the CCMA and other Tribunals, to operate to avoid labour unrest and for unions be afforded the right to represent members. It is clear that government as the employer is intentionally keeping the Bargaining Councils closed to avoid dealing with the implementation of the wage agreement, to deny public servants the rights to have social justice delivered in an expedited manner. The *Labour Relations Act* provides for a speedy resolution of disputes to ensure social justice, and the PSA will at all cost ensure that it enforce these rights for its members.

The epidemic should not be used as an excuse or an opportunity to violate and suppress Constitutional rights.

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