

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA welcomes 10-year sentence for copper cable theft at PRASA
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) continues to be concerned regarding the destruction of infrastructure in South Africa, including the theft of copper cables which has destabilised the network systems of entities such as Prasa and Transnet. In light of this, the PSA welcomes the arrest of the two individuals who stole the copper cables worth R300 000. The two criminals were sentenced to 10 years of direct imprisonment without a fine.

The PSA maintains that the destruction of infrastructure needs integrated efforts from various stakeholders to stop such crimes. There should be good leadership and decisive management of public infrastructure. Infrastructure-related crimes are on the rise. It is a source of income for organised criminal syndicates. There is little evidence to show that the current laws are effective in deterring these criminal activities. The unrelenting power crisis and persistent load-shedding have a huge impact on the sabotage of infrastructure belonging to various state-owned entities such as Eskom and Prasa. The damages to copper cables, electricity pylons, cable theft, and destructive acts at power stations continue to affect the economy of the country. Businesses, schools, and health care facilities are sabotaged and cannot render proper services to citizens of the republic. The railway networks operated by Prasa and Transnet remain the major target for syndicates, with the total costs of damages amounting to tens of billions of Rands, which could be used for job creation or the improvement of health care infrastructure.

The introduction of the *Criminal Matters Amendment Act 2015*, which regulated infrastructure-related crimes is welcomed. The *Act* must be overhauled, so that hefty sentences can be imposed. The PSA urges the Justice system to be efficient and effective by fast-tracking criminal cases of such nature. The *Act* should advocate for 30 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to R100 million. These hefty prison sentences will deter future offenders and prevent such acts from recurring. The lives of citizens are put at risk and in danger due to the destruction of infrastructure. The PSA calls on members of the public to report incidences of intentional damage to public infrastructure to law enforcement agencies so that South Africa can attract investors and create more jobs.

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