

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA welcomes closure of Phalaborwa Magistrates Court
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the closure of the Phalaborwa Magistrates Court and prohibition and contravention notices being issued to several Limpopo Magistrates Courts by the Department of Employment and Labour.

The PSA visited Lulekani, Namakgale, and Phalaborwa Magistrates Courts in February 2023 and found that working conditions at these workstations were in contravention of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*. The PSA immediately engaged the employer on the poor working conditions at these courts as the employer was in contravention of section 8 of the *OHSA*, which stipulates that it must provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe working environment that is without risk to the health of employees. The PSA gave the employer seven days to respond. When no response was received, the matter was escalated to the Department of Employment and Labour. A Labour Inspector conducted an inspection on 22 June 2023 and issued a contravention notice at Phalaborwa Magistrate Court for the use of cash hall offices, which poses a danger to employees' health and safety. The probation notice was issued because of leaks in portions of the building. Some parts of the building had open holes, electric wires are installed in the roof, which may cause a fire. The building structure requires urgent and immediate attention. An electrical certificate of compliance for the building is also required. Another prohibition notice was issued at Phalaborwa Magistrate Court for the use of parking bays that are in danger of collapse. The contravention notice was also issued as the employer must keep passage floors in a good state and keep the roof and walls free of leaks.

The Labour Inspector further inspected Lulekani Magistrate Court where a contravention notice was issued for general safety and environmental regulations in that there must be a copy of the *OHSA*, and the first-aid box must be fully stocked. The employer must also ensure the building complies with National Building Regulations Standards with a valid certificate of electrical compliance.

It is unacceptable for employees to work in an environment that is unsafe and poses a danger to their health. The PSA thus welcomes the prohibition and contravention notices issued to the courts as a positive step towards addressing these concerns. All workers have the right to a safe and healthy working environment and the PSA will continue to advocate for improved working conditions. The notices could have been avoided had the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development dealt with the problems timeously. The PSA urges the Department to prioritise the repairs and upgrades. The health and safety of employees should never be compromised in pursuit of service delivery. The PSA calls on the Department to ensure that alternative measures, such as alternative office space, are sought and that the safety of employees is not compromised. The PSA will monitor the situation and work with the relevant authorities to ensure that employees' rights and well-being are protected.

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