

**MEDIA RELEASE:** Goedemoed Prison attacks: PSA outraged by fatal attacks on DCS employees

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**EMBARGO:** None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has laid the blame for the killing and brutal attack of two Correctional Services Officers at the Goedemoed Medium Correctional Centre in the Free State on 29 March 2019 at the door of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

“These tragedies are directly linked to inadequate staffing at Correctional Centres, especially during weekends. During the recent attacks, a female DCS official was stabbed with scissors died on the scene. The other female official was taken hostage and allegedly rape by an inmate. After hours of negotiations with the inmate who is serving a life sentence, the official was freed by the criminal,” said PSA General Manager, Ivan Fredericks.

The PSA represents thousands of DCS officials and has continuously raised the urgency in various forums, including the DCS Departmental Bargaining Chamber, the Ministerial Consultative Forum, Regional and National Bargaining Forums and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of filling vacant posts in the DCS to address safety.

“The PSA believes that these attacks could have been avoided if sufficient officials were on duty. Goedemoed Center functions over weekends with only half of its staff establishment because of the shift pattern that applies at the centre. How many lives must be sacrificed before the DCS will wake up and ensure that it complies with its own member-inmate-ratio document and ensures adequate staffing?” said Mr Fredericks.

The PSA pointed out that it is a shame that the DCS is spending millions on litigation in defending the member-inmate-ratio dispute and pleads poverty when it is compelled to ensure a safe working environment for its officials. “The DCS is aware of the safety risks associated with understaffing but has dismally failed to address the situation. It is unacceptable, bordering on criminal, that DCS officials are expected to carry out their duties, including the monitoring of dangerous inmates, without the necessary support and in the face of policies that promote the interest and rights of inmates while glaringly neglecting the rights of its employees,” said Mr Fredericks.

“Goedemoed officials and their families are in the PSA’s thoughts and prayers. The PSA calls upon the DCS to ensure that officials at the Centre receive trauma counselling and the necessary support. At the same time, the PSA demands decisive action from the Minister of Correctional Services to resolve understaffing without delay as we are dealing with a ‘ticking bomb’,” said Mr Fredericks.

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