

MEDIA RELEASE Women's Day: PSA calls for more legislative support

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) that represents thousands of female public servants calls on government to intensify efforts to protect South African women against various forms of abuse.

On the eve of Women's Day in 2020, female workers are exposed to additional and unexpected challenges, compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought many public services to their knees. The extended lockdown period to curb the spread of the virus saw a distressing steep increase in violence against women, with many incidents still going unreported. The PSA recently lost one of its passionate female shop stewards in Gauteng after she was brutally raped and murdered.

The United Nations described this worldwide increase in domestic abuse, as a "shadow pandemic" alongside COVID-19, with statistics showing an increase of 20% in violence, with victims often being trapped at home with their abuser.

The pandemic of abuse is, however, not only a personal matter behind closed doors. Studies have confirmed that abuse has a ripple effect and impacts on the victim's workplace performance, including time-off to cover the physical signs of abuse or for attending to legal proceedings.

Physical abuse is, however, not the only battle faced by women. Despite gains made to empower women in the workplace, women remain underpaid and vulnerable to workplace harassment. With all the programmes touted by government, many still feel fear in reporting matters impacting them, in a space where the legal obligation falls on the employer to ensure their safety.

The PSA has been a custodian of females' workplace rights for more than 100 years, achieving major successes to ensure the equality of women in the public service workspace. The PSA calls on government to allocate more resources towards supporting women in the workplace, especially the survivors of abuse. In addition, the PSA appeals to government to implement formal legislation aimed at the protection of women who perform atypical jobs that too often subject them to exploitation.

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