

PSA accuses SAHRC of biasness in the hospital psychiatric ward probe

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PSA accuses SAHRC of biasness in the hospital psychiatric ward probe 2020-Feb-26 11:20 The Public Servants Association (PSA) has accused the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of biasness and of sabotaging investigations into overcrowding and ill-treatment of patients at the psychiatric ward of Dr George Mukhari Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria. - Gomolemo Mothomogolo The Public Servants Association (PSA) has accused the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of biasness and of sabotaging investigations into overcrowding and ill-treatment of patients at the psychiatric ward of Dr George Mukhari Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria. The PSA lodged a complaint of human rights violations of mental health patients with the human rights commission last year. The union alleged that there was patient overcrowding, ongoing renovations while patients occupied the ward, understaffing and safety concerns. But the union said it is still waiting feedback from SAHRC. PSA Provincial Manager, Olivia Mashigo, said the union is concerned about the lack of communication from SAHRC. "The credibility of the investigator appointed by the Commissioner is in question, as she was biased during the process. The only thing that happens is that there was a meeting with all parties and the investigator protected the CEO and his actions an insinuated that he is not responsible so he must be given time," Mashigo said. The commission visited the hospital in June last year and raised concerns over the noise, smell of paint at the psychiatric ward where patients were being treated and overcrowding. This prompted the commission to probe allegations of human rights abuses against mental health patients. The union accused the SAHRC of failing to prioritise the case because it doesn't generate publicity for the commission. " We believe that because our case was not in the media it did not take the priority because it doesn't fall within the Commission's heightened visibility," said Mashigo. In an email that Newsnote has seen, hospital management also condemned SAHRC for failing to protect the human rights of mental health patients during the media walkout last year. "DGMAH [Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital] management is open to scrutiny by any Chapter 9 institution, however, this should be done in a human and respectful manner, especially toward patients. The conduct of the Commission of bringing media and failing to control them around patients was disappointing and contrary to the Commission's mandate to uphold human rights, especially of the vulnerable group like mental health patients," read the email. The hospital management denied allegations of overcrowding. Dr George Mukhari Hospital spokesperson, Zweli Ndwandwe, confirmed that the SAHRC investigated a number of allegations related to the psychiatric ward. "An investigation was conducted, however, I can confirm that most of the allegations that were made were not necessarily true as it was reflected from the report by the Human Rights Commission," Ndwandwe said. But the hospital admitted that there were ongoing refurbishments of the ward while patients were admitted there. "Yes, there were certain elements that were factual, for example, that there were some renovations that were taking place at that point in time. But due to the fact that we didn't have enough space to accommodate our patients, we were forced that while the renovations were taking place in one area we allocate in another area, but they will be affected by the noise and the dust," said Ndwandwe. The SAHRC requested Newsnote to email questions, but had not responded by the time of publishing