

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **Correctional Services: PSA condemns EST deployment in KZN**

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**EMBARGO**                                None

**ENQUIRIES**                              communication@psa.co.za

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is disturbed by the apparent sowing of division by the National Commissioner of Correctional Services in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and total disregard of unions in the province.

At the beginning of April 2021, the National Commissioner deployed more than 30 members of the Emergency Support Team (EST) and other staff members, wearing civilian clothes, from different management areas outside KZN to Ncome Management Area. This followed incidents involving a prisoner and a female warden at the facility. The EST deployment was done without the prior knowledge of the acting KZN Regional Commissioner, the Area Commissioner of Ncome Management Area and unions. The PSA was informed that these arrangements were kept secret from the Ncome Area Commissioner as arrangements were made with his subordinate and Deputy Director. No terms of reference were given to either management of the Management Area or unions.

The PSA was extremely concerned about the impact on the safety employees in these centres as EST members entered the centres carrying bags and teargas cannisters and refused to be searched. This conduct is against Department of Correctional Services (DCS) policies. The disrespect for employees resulted in the PSA raising various urgent concerns with the acting Provincial Commissioner and his executive.

The PSA indicated that it was opposed to the EST deployment and demanded its immediate removal from Ncome as proper consultation had not taken place. The PSA demanded that the unlawful vetting of employees at Ncome should stop with immediate effect as this was against the stipulations of the Public Service Regulations. In addition, searches conducted by the EST at employees' houses should cease with immediate effect.

The PSA further informed the authorities that the Union's members at Ncome accounted to the Area Commissioner and that they will not take any instruction from EST members who remain on site as such instructions would be unlawful. The PSA also informed the DCS that there will be no cooperation with the deployed EST until the Department has concluded proper consulting on the matter.

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