

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA concerned about Home Affairs employees' safety during lockdown level 3**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing thousands of employees of the Department of Home Affairs, has noted with concern the lack of security at the Department's offices and specifically the Roodepoort office.

The Department's office in Roodepoort over the past two days had several incidents where the members of the public stormed the office, refuse to leave and threatened officials. Several of the Department's offices in the vicinity were closed owing to positive COVID-19 cases, which resulted in the public turning to the Roodepoort office for services. The office has two security guards who could not manage the crowds.

In addition, the office experienced a serious water problem after a water pipe bust. There were no toilet facilities for staff or the public. In line with health and safety regulations, the office should close if it is not possible to provide alternative means of toilet facilities and drinking water. When the members of the public were informed of this, some 100 people stormed inside the building and refused to leave.

This issue of dealing with members of the public and clients from other offices was raised several times with the Department's management. Management has, however, not responded or indicated how employees will be protected against abusive members of the public. The crowds furthermore had no regard for social distancing and ignored all requests by Home Affairs employees and security officials to maintain safe distances. The crowd became unruly and threatened employees when they were requested to wear masks and maintain a safe distance. The situation became dangerous and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department had to be called in to escort employees to safety.

This is not the first incident that was reported to the Department's management. Several incidents, including a member of the public slapping an employee as well as threats against the lives of employees and of burning down the office have been reported to management. The Department's failure to respond and address the situation gives rise to serious concerns about the safety of employees. The PSA again brought the issues to the attention of the Department's management. Should there be no immediate reaction from the management, the PSA will approach the Minister of Home Affairs and consider a legal route to enforce the safety of employees.

END

