

**MEDIA RELEASE** PSA concerned about poor state of South African court buildings and service delivery by Department of Justice and Constitutional Development

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**EMBARGO** None

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

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), as the Union representing the majority of employees of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, is extremely concerned about the poor state of court buildings and failing infrastructure.

Many court buildings are in poor condition, thereby exposing employees and the public to risks. Court buildings are not being maintained and are in contravention of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. In some instances, these buildings have visible cracks, do not have clean running water, ablution facilities are not working, roofs are leaking, lifts are not working, and doors and windows are broken. At most courts, body scanners used for security are out of order, thereby compromising the safety of employees and the public. CCTV cameras intended to enhance security by monitoring movements of people are not working in most court buildings. In addition, some courts have holding cells used for prisoners awaiting trials, which pose a further risk to employees and the public owing to the poor state of buildings.

The Department is further experiencing problems with its network system, with most employees' email addresses not being active for the past three years. Employees are thus unable to receive or send emails. Some employees have resorted to using their private email addresses for official purposes. Such acts to ensure that service delivery continues, despite being commendable are, however, undesirable and embarrassing for such a crucial government department. The Department has indicated that its information and technology system has not recovered from being hacked in late 2021. Communication between the Department and its stakeholders through emails is therefore impacted and, in some instances, non-existent, thereby severely hampering service delivery.

The PSA urges the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development to intervene in this deepening crisis. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure must further ensure that courts falling under its responsibility are addressed as matter of urgency. The PSA will not hesitate to approach the Department of Employment and Labour for appropriate relief in protecting the safety and health of employees and members of the public.

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