

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	PSA condemns Limpopo Department of Education's continued negligence on safety at Rehlahleng Special School
<b>DATE</b>	2 December 2024
<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the Limpopo Department of Education's persistent failure to address critical safety concerns at Rehlahleng Special School, despite repeated warnings and alarming incidents, including an alleged sexual assault.

The situation at the School reached a distressing peak earlier this year when School Governing Body (SGB) members illegally obstructed two employees from reporting for duty. These employees had acted in good faith, raising urgent safety concerns about the well-being of learners, only to face alleged resistance from the School's Principal. Their attempts to escalate the matter to higher authorities, including the Circuit and District Offices, and through the PSA, have been met with inaction. The PSA has approached the Office of the Public Protector to investigate several complaints.

Rehlahleng Special School, which caters to learners with severe physical and intellectual disabilities, is in a dire state, lacking fundamental support services such as a Social Worker and Professional Nurse. The PSA recently witnessed serious health and safety violations during a visit to the School whilst addressing grievances from members. Amongst the alarming findings were leaking roofs, causing wet and slippery floors with the PSA witnessing several learners slipping and falling on wet tiles. There are inadequate sleeping arrangements, with mattresses and bedding placed on the floor in recreation areas, suggesting overcrowding. Additionally, there are insufficient bathroom and toilet facilities for the nearly 150 learners, a substandard kitchen and cooking facilities, raising concerns about hygiene and nutrition.

Following the PSA's intervention, the Department of Employment and Labour conducted an inspection on 28 November 2024. The School was issued nine Compliance Notices, underscoring the gravity of the risks. The Department of Education has been given 60 days to comply. The PSA will monitor progress closely, including applying for the details of these notices once accessible.

The PSA commends the Department of Employment and Labour for its prompt and professional response, emphasising that these actions will help ensuring the safety of learners and employees. However, the Department of Education's inaction remains unacceptable. The PSA once again calls for the Department to address these issues and hold SGB members accountable for their obstructionist behaviour, which undermines the rights and safety of learners and employees.

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