

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA demands immediate closure of hazardous Government Printing Works building
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), as the union representing the majority of employees at the Government Printing Works (GPW), is alarmed by hazardous and deteriorating conditions of the GPW building in Bosman Street, Gauteng.

Employees are subjected to unbearable and unsafe working conditions, endangering their health and safety. The building has extensive structural defects, including deep cracks in walls, unstable poles and beams, and deteriorating expansion joints. These defects make the structure prone to collapse, endangering the lives of employees. In addition, employees are continuously exposed to strong chemical odours owing to inadequate ventilation. Hygiene standards are also severely compromised, with unsanitary kitchen and toilet facilities. The situation is more dire for employees in the factory section. They are not provided with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for operating heavy printing machinery. Employees demanding PPE are victimised and subjected to disciplinary action.

The building also suffers from persistent water leakages owing to a damaged roof, with exposed electrical wiring posing a severe fire and electrocution hazard. Many offices lack access to clean drinking water. Emergency evacuation doors and escape routes are chained, leaving employees with no means of safely exiting in case of an emergency. Fire safety measures are inadequate, with only a limited number of fire extinguishers available.

The PSA previously raised these concerns with the GPW management and recommended the relocation of employees to alternative office space in Visagie Street, where sufficient capacity was identified for production site employees. Management, however, failed to act, neglecting its responsibility to ensure a safe working environment. The PSA therefore escalated the matter to the Department of Employment and Labour, requesting an urgent inspection. On 25 February 2025, Labour Inspectors conducted an inspection and were appalled by the conditions. The Inspectors remarked that the building was non-compliant with occupational health and safety regulations and indicated that multiple contravention notices would be issued - this is after notices were issued and hidden from labour. Additionally, it was recommended that the GPW engages a structural engineer for further assessment.

Whilst the PSA welcomes the intervention of the Labour Inspectors, the Union urges the Department of Employment and Labour to expedite the process and immediately close the building to prevent a potential catastrophe. The PSA maintains that the building is beyond repair and that employees face immediate and unacceptable dangers. The PSA urges the Chief Inspector to issue a Prohibition Notice based on overwhelming evidence gathered during the inspection. The safety and well-being of employees must be prioritised. The PSA will

continue to advocate for urgent action to ensure that employees are relocated to a safe working environment without further delay.

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