

**MEDIA RELEASE****PSA enraged by lock-out of employees at SAPS Head Office owing to rental payment dispute**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing thousands of South African Police Service (SAPS) employees, is enraged that police officers were locked out of the SAPS Pretoria Head Office owing to a rental dispute with the landlord.

The inefficiency of the Department of Public Works and the SAPS is not only causing embarrassment but disrupts services as police officers cannot access files they are working on until the matter is resolved. Operations affected include criminal records and crime-scene management, which are critical to ensuring the rendering of an efficient police service. It is reported that the SAPS was already experiencing a backlog with issuing clearance certificates and processing DNA samples, which will be exacerbated by the lock-out.

This lock-out follows in the wake of a recent similar situation at the Department of Higher Education and Training, where two of the Department's offices were closed and staff evacuated owing to non-payment of rent by government. This trend must be eradicated, and departments must ensure that rental payments are up to date. The disruption of much-needed services creates severe problems for already compromised service delivery owing to incapacity at most departments.

The SAPS is already understaffed with resulting backlogs on DNA processing and clearance certificates. This has a ripple effect on the efficiency of the state to provide a secure environment to the people of South Africa. The situation further has the potential of negatively affecting the morale of staff, which is already in a decline.

The PSA has previously called on government to invest in obtaining its own buildings to accommodate government departments without the payment of exorbitant rent, which ends up being unaffordable and creating embarrassment and a disruption of services. The Minister of Police is urged to engage the relevant stakeholders to urgently resolve this critical matter as a single day without provision of these services cannot be afforded. The Department of Public Works' inefficiency has increasingly adverse effects on service delivery and its repeated failures cannot be left unanswered.

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