



HOSPERSA SLAMS GOVERNMENT FOR SLOW REACTION TO EMS ATTACKS CRISIS

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Hospersa has criticised government for taking time in addressing issues around the attacks on Emergency Medical Service (EMS) workers. This comes in the wake of reports that two EMS workers were robbed at gunpoint yesterday morning. The Union calls on government to urgently address the safety issues faced by its members which have seen attacks increasing at an alarming rate since the beginning of the year.

According to reports, two EMS workers were robbed at gunpoint in Alexandra, north of Johannesburg, yesterday morning. It is reported that the EMS workers were transporting a patient at around 02:00 when two armed men confronted them and forced them to stop the ambulance. The armed men robbed them of their wallets and cellphones and then fled.

“We strongly condemn these attacks on EMS [Emergency Medical Services] workers” said Hospersa General Secretary Noel Desfontaines. “Government needs to escalate the safety of EMS workers as these attacks are increasing at an alarming rate,” he added.

It is reported that a similar incident occurred in Cosmo City, west of Johannesburg, two weeks ago. While in the Western Cape, attacks on EMS workers continues to be a thorn in the flesh. The most recent incident occurred at Hanover Park over the past weekend when EMS workers were forced to abandon rescue efforts at a shooting incident.

“Government’s response to this issue continues to be at a sluggish pace while our members continue to work in fear,” argued Desfontaines. “There has been several incidents reported in KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Limpopo since the beginning of the year. We have called for national intervention to address the scourge of these attacks yet our calls have fallen on deaf ears,” added Desfontaines.

“Earlier this year, Hospersa wrote an open letter to the Western Cape Health Member of the Executive Council (MEC) to address the safety issues Cape Town. The Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) of which Hospersa is an affiliate, also wrote a similar letter to the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi requesting intervention at national level yet government has not made any stride in reassuring our members on their safety,” said Desfontaines.

“Hospersa has the duty to ensure that its members work in safe and healthy conditions,” said Desfontaines. “According to the OHS [Occupational Health and Safety] Act employees have the right to refuse to work in unsafe conditions, but as we have previously indicated, such refusal is often problematic. The reason for this is that EMS workers have a duty to serve the community and it becomes very difficult to refuse when somebody in need calls you,” Desfontaines explained.

“We want to see government doing more to address this issue. The alarm bells continue to ring, ignoring them would only paralyse the service and deprive communities of essential medical services at a time when it is needed the most,” concluded Desfontaines.

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