



Advocate Bongani Majola  
Chairperson: South African Human Rights Commission  
c/o: Ms Yonela Diko  
By email: [ydiko@sahrc.org.za](mailto:ydiko@sahrc.org.za)

9 May 2018

Dear Adv Majola

**REQUEST FOR URGENT INVESTIGATION: HEALTH IMPACT OF PROTESTS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

1. You will be aware of the ongoing disruptions in health care services in North West Province due to the protests by health unions in the Province.
2. The protests have had a detrimental impact on the access to health care services of people in the province. We have received reports of protestors invading theatres, threats to the lives of doctors, doctors being forcefully removed from hospital wards and entrances to hospitals being blocked off, meaning no supplies or drugs can be delivered.
3. The disruption will also have long-term consequences as patients with HIV, TB and other chronic diseases are unable to collect their chronic medication. Many patients will simply be lost to the system forever because record-keeping systems in the province are severely dysfunctional. This too will eventually cause loss of life.
4. We stand in solidarity with many of the demands of striking health care workers for decent and safe working conditions and living wages. In particular, the practice of paying what amounts to slave wages to community health workers and lay counsellors is abusive and undermines the workers themselves and the value that they add to the health system. However, the protests have denied vulnerable and poor people access to healthcare and life-saving services. This causes great pain, suffering and loss of life for the most vulnerable.
5. While the North West Department of Health and the provincial Treasury have been placed under administration, the protests have continued and the negative impact on patients remains.
6. It is for this reason that we request an urgent investigation, by the South African Human Rights Commission, into the violations of the rights of health care service users as a result of the strike action. The publication of a report following such an investigation will be important to shed light on the issue and will inform discussions around possible Minimum Service Level Agreements in the health sector, discussions that we believe are necessary to appropriately protect the right to strike while also protecting the rights of health care service users to receive such services.

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Founded by:



7. The Rural Health Advocacy Project has been working with a number of doctors in the province and would welcome the opportunity to put you in touch with these doctors. In addition, I attach the following documents that may assist in the Commission's investigation:

- RHAP and Doctors Statement on NW crisis to National Task Team
- Discussion document: Healthcare workers rights, ethics and a minimum service level agreement or alternative mechanism

8. Lastly, we are a member of the StopStockOuts Project (SSP), a consortium of organisations advocating for reliable access to essential medicines. We believe it would be beneficial if the SAHRC, as part of this process, also engages with the SSP on its experiences and findings on the disruption of health services in the North West Province.

9. I look forward to hearing from you and trust that we will be able to work together on this important matter.



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