

WAGES DISPUTE

Municipal workers strike on the cards

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MUNICIPAL workers in all 257 municipal councils in South Africa have threatened to down tools if the government goes ahead with the implementation of the R356 salary increase proposed by the negotiation facilitator at the bargaining council.

While all municipal unions are yet to make a decision, the SA Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) has urged its members to prepare for a protest following a breakdown in negotiations over wage increases.

Samwu and the SA Local Government Association (Salga) have been involved in protracted wage negotiations that resulted in the appointment of a facilitator to oversee the process, which was marred by serious disputes.

Now, it appears that these negotiations are due to stall again after the facilitator tabled a R356 salary hike.

Samwu deputy secretary Dumisane Magagula said they received the offer on June 7, adding the purpose of the facilitator's proposal was, if agreed by all parties (Samwu, the Independent Municipal & Allied Trade Union and Salga) to form the basis of a salary and wage agreement for the sector.

"We, however, would like to point out that, as Samwu, we are of the view that the facilitator's proposal is biased towards Salga as the employer. The facilitator has neglected all of the issues which were put forward by workers. In fact, we have noted the facilitator's proposal as a repetition of the employer's arguments and



SAMWU member have threatened to down tools | African News Agency(ANA)

offer throughout these negotiations," Magagula said. He said the facilitator has proposed the following:

- ◆ A three-year salary and wage agreement.
- ◆ A 4% salary increase in the first year of the agreement and projected CPI minus 1% in the outer years of the agreement.
- ◆ A total freeze on all benefits to municipal workers in the first year of the agreement. These will be fully unfrozen only in the last year of the agreement.
- ◆ The sectoral minimum wage to increase only in line with salary increases.
- ◆ The deferment of the employability of Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Work Programme staff and the demands for maternity and paternity leave to other processes.

Magagula said the 4% proposed salary increase was spitting in the face of municipal workers.

The proposed increase meant that the least paid municipal workers would

receive a salary increase of R356 before tax. "It should, however, be noted that food inflation on its own is above 10%, while other items in the cost of living have also significantly gone up, thus leaving municipal workers not being able to make means.

"Workers had demanded a R4 000 salary increase across the board.

"This was to ensure that the wage gap in the sector is narrowed and that workers receive decent increases.

"Yet again, the facilitator neglected the genuine demands of workers and continued doing the bidding for the employer and proposed a below-inflation salary increase," Magagula said.

"It should be noted that a majority of municipal workers are currently earning below R15 000 and as such they are unable to live a decent life," he said.

Samwu has until June 22 to respond to the facilitator's proposals, but has already called on its members to resist the latest offer.