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PUBLIC PROTECTOR

Busi must pay to stay in state's house now

Citizen reporter

The Public Protector South Africa (PPSA) has confirmed that suspended public protector advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane is not being evicted from the state house in Pretoria's Bryntirion estate – but if she continues to live there she must do so at her own cost.

Mkhwebane's stay at the estate has until now been at taxpayers' expense.

"The institution acknowledges that the subject matter involves the use of public funds, and thus is of interest to the people of South Africa.

"The institution wishes to place it on record that it has taken a decision to notify the department of public works and infrastructure of its intention to terminate a lease agreement, for immovable property, entered into by the PPSA and the department of public works.

"Communication was formally addressed to the department on 31 October, 2022," said the Office of the Public Protector.

According to the office, this was done to rectify the obligation of who bears the financial costs of Mkhwebane's accommodation.

The office said it started looking into the matter before Mkhwebane's suspension and the process was communicated to her on 18 October, 2022.

Mkhwebane moved into the Bryntirion ministerial estate in 2017 after claiming there were threats to her life. The flat reportedly cost the Office of the Public Protector R11 000 a month in rent.

Regarding calls for an investigation into her legal expenses, the Office of the Public Protector said there was a process under way in parliament.

"While awaiting the outcomes of this process, which may give direction on further action to be taken by PPSA, the institution

has already reported the matter to the auditor-general and confirmation was received that the matter will be an area they will focus on within the scope of the next audit."

PPSA added that it is also in the process of reviewing its systems regarding the procurement of legal services.

"This is to identify gaps and put in place appropriate corrective measures, which will include reporting to the relevant authorities where necessary, in order to ensure that its message of promoting good governance in state affairs is lived up to from within," it said.