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WORKERS belonging to the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers slept outside the offices. | ITUMELENG ENGLISH (ANA)

CONTRACT EXTENSION

Workers protest at Gauteng Health offices

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THE Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has dismissed reports that it is refusing to extend the contracts of more than 4 000 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers.

This week, the workers vowed to disrupt and sleep outside the provincial headquarters of the department on Wednesday until their demands for contract extensions were met.

The affected employees have vowed to continue protesting as some of their contracts have ended as of today.

However, GDoH spokesperson Motalale Modiba denied the accusations levelled against the department, saying the protesting employees were given one-year contracts.

He said the department was trying to clean up the system, which has been corrupted by those who failed to

keep to the stipulations of the original contracts, resulting in some of the employees being engaged with the department for up to 10 years.

However, on Wednesday and yesterday, scores of affected workers belonging to the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (Nupsaw) vowed to continue fighting for their rights to be considered for contract extensions and full-time employment.

When *The Star* arrived on Wednesday night and yesterday morning, the undeterred employees, some in wheelchairs and others walking on sticks, vowed they would not move as they had been promised a contract extension following multiple engagements with Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi and the department.

Non-striking officials and workers from the various departments housed at the Life Centre building on Com-

missioner and Market streets were barred from accessing their workplace.

The union has accused the GDoH of reneging on its promise to extend the contracts of more than 4 000 workers whose contracts are allegedly coming to an end.

Nupsaw provincial organiser Austin Mofya said senior officials of the department, as well as Lesufi, had gone back on their earlier promises of extending the contracts of the workers, some of whom have been working as health-care assistants at clinics and hospitals under the EPWP mandate for more than 15 years.

Kedibone Motaung, 56, one of the many workers who slept on the streets at the Life Centre building on Wednesday night, said: "The department does not care. We are fighting for our jobs. Some of us have been here for many years, working for R3 500 as EPWP workers."