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**Author:** Sikho Ntshobane

# Municipal workers protest in Mthatha over lack of protective clothing

SIKHO NTSHOBANE

More than 250 King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality employees staged a protest march in Mthatha on Wednesday, demanding to be issued with protective clothing and proper equipment.

The workers, affiliated to the SA Municipal Workers Union (Samwu), marched to the ANC OR Tambo regional offices and the municipal buildings.

They said they were also unhappy with the state of the Munitata Building, which houses some municipal departments as well as mayor Nyaniso Nelani and municipal manager Ngamela Pakade's offices.

The marchers were forced to turn back after finding the ANC regional offices in Nelson Mandela Drive closed.

Samwu KSD chair Iwazi Madyibi said they had decided to march to the party's offices because ANC employees were running the local municipality. The marchers were told that

officials in the office had been deployed to Port St Johns municipality, where by-elections were taking place in ward 2.

"Let us not be discouraged," Madyibi told the marchers.

"We were not here to protest but to ask the party to intervene. We [municipal workers] are the face of service delivery."

"And yet we get insulted by the public. They say there is no service delivery. But they don't know the inside story."

The workers handed over a petition to Pakade outside the Munitata building.

Speaking to journalists on the sidelines of the march, Madyibi said they believed the building was not safe.

"When it rains it leaks and there are no emergency exits in case of a fire. The only entry and exit point is the door."

He said workers in many municipal departments were forced to wear civilian clothes on duty because the authorities had failed to provide them with



protective clothing.

He said a municipal traffic officer Dan Mxoli, 62, who was shot and killed at a busy in-

tersection in the town by a motorist in October last year, did not have a bulletproof vest, pepper spray or firearm at the

time.

"The only thing he was carrying was a pen and a book. Recently, one of the waste

collectors was cut by a broken

glass while picking up trash. "He was wearing his own takkies because they don't even

**AGGRIEVED:** Samwu members in KSD municipality marched to the ANC regional offices in Mthatha and later the municipality, demanding protective clothing for workers and a monthly travel allowance for employees who use their own vehicles, among other demands.

PICTURE: SIKHO NTSHOBANE

have safety boots," Madyibi said.

He said even expanded public works programme workers were not being provided with protective clothing.

Madyibi said the marchers were also unhappy that senior managers were being given a monthly travel allowance of R15,000 each even though many worked in the office all day.

Some staff members were also forced to use their own vehicles for work purposes, and the union wanted them to also get a travel allowance instead of being expected to claim from the municipality.

In addition, the marchers wanted the municipality to stop outsourcing some services.

Madyibi said KSD municipal bosses were hiring private service providers to man access points in municipal buildings, a job that had previously been done in-house.

Private contractors were also being used to fix electricity

faults after hours, despite the municipality having its own technicians. As a result, municipal workers were not benefiting from overtime.

After accepting their petition, Pakade assured the workers that management and the council valued the staff because no municipality could function without them.

He said KSD had already procured protective clothing for its staff, some of which had already arrived, while the rest was on the way.

He said the municipality would look into the other grievances raised by the Samwu members in their petition.

"Our community services have been keeping the town clean."

"Complaints from the community [about the filthy state] of the town have gone down."

"Sometimes it might seem like we don't care but some things take longer to be done due to budget constraints," he said.