



Publication: Daily Dispatch - Main

Title: SIU urges Bhisho to investigate staffer's 'full salary' for sitting at home for six years

Publish date: 21 Jun 2023

Page: 4

Reach: 10889

AVE:R
17115.15

Author: Gosa

SIU urges Bhisho to investigate staffer's 'full salary' for sitting at home for six years

Nehawu accuses legislature of ignoring labour legislation

SIVENATHI GOSA

Since an accident in 2017 which left her paralysed, provincial legislature employee Kumaro Gazo has allegedly been at home drawing her full salary with benefits.

A whistle-blower wrote to the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) about the claim, and the SIU then wrote to the Eastern Cape provincial legislature calling for an investigation.

The National Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) has questioned why she was being paid after an injury which

had occurred outside working hours. It said what the province had allowed was not legislated for.

The Dispatch has seen the SIU's letter to the legislature as well as Nehawu's letter. In 2017, the Dispatch reported that Gazo was left paralysed from the neck down after claims that her alleged lover and immediate boss had driven over her during an apparent lover's tiff.

The matter was never reported to police and the alleged driver has faced no charges.

The incident took place after a Bafana Bafana soccer match against Angola at the Absa Stadium.

It was said that after the

match, a group of friends went to party at Gazo's house and then went to a house in Bishop's Estate.

Gazo was injured after reportedly standing in front of a car to stop the man, said to be her lover at the time, from leaving.

It is alleged that he then drove over her. The driver is a senior provincial government official.

The SIU letter, written by provincial head Zodwa Xesibe, said a whistle-blower had informed the unit of allegations that Gazo, a senior manager for risk management, had been involved in a motor vehicle accident in 2017.

Xesibe said: "The whistle-blower[s] allege that instead of,

after the prescribed processes of medical boarding/or incapacity, certain senior managers at the legislature and/or management of the legislature have opted to protect the employee at the expense of the state.

"The whistle-blower[s] alleges that this amounts to maladministration, favouritism and abuse of state resources."

The SIU said in terms of relevant legislation it believed the matter would best be dealt with by the legislature.

Nehawu's Bhisho legislature branch chair, Madoda Nkwali, confirmed the union had also written to the SIU to investigate.

"We have been fully engaged in this matter since it occurred.

We had meetings and also wrote numerous correspondences to the secretary and speaker of the legislature."

But when Nehawu was told by the speaker and her executive committee they were "closing the matter from discussion", Nehawu decided to take the matter further.

"It means that they disregard legislature leave policy and acts of government such as the

Nehawu has questioned why she was being paid after an injury which had occurred outside working hours

Labour Relations and Occupational Health & Safety acts that prescribe how this matter must be handled."

Nkwali said the speaker and the secretary had protected Gazo by not putting her on incapacity or boarding her.

"We are looking forward to this investigation so that public funds which are [allegedly] abused by the legislature for paying a person who is sitting at home for period of six years is stopped."

"The union wants this matter to be reported to the police and then for the perpetrator to pay for the costs of her injuries, not the legislature, as is happening today."

Nkwali said in their last meet-

ing with the legislature, they were told Gazo would be removed from the post of senior manager to the post of unit manager in the office of the secretary to the legislature, but with full benefits of a senior manager.

"She will be the only unit manager enjoying a car scheme benefit in the legislature when or if she returns to the legislature."

The Dispatch has seen a letter written to Nehawu on June 20 by the legislature on the matter.

It stated: "An arrangement is being made for alternative office accommodation for Ms Gazo to physically return to work on July 3 2023.

"The two offices that were previously identified for Ms Gazo will require alterations, and the department of public works and infrastructure has been requested to accelerate those structural improvements."

Legislature spokesperson Lwandile Sicwetsha said: "We acknowledge that a case by Nehawu has been opened against the legislature with the SIU ... we are in the process responding to information requested from us."

"Looking after the needs of persons with disabilities is one of the institution's priorities."

Attempts to reach Gazo for comment by print deadline were unsuccessful.