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**A company director of Babereki Consulting Engineers, Tshego Motaung, and the former head of the Department of Roads and Public Works, Patience Mokhali, were arrested by the Hawks this week. Picture: Soraya Crowie**

## Questions over ‘hurried’ arrests in the Kimberley mental hospital case

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A FORMER member of the standing committee on public accounts (Scopa) and chairperson of the Northern Cape Civics Organisation, Ross Henderson, has questioned the “hurried arrest” of individuals implicated in the multimillion-rand Kimberley Mental Health Hospital fraud, corruption and money laundering case.

The former head of the Department of Roads and Public Works, Patience Mokhali, 63, and a company director of Babereki Consulting Engineers, Tshego Motaung, 59, were arrested by the Hawks this week in connection with the case.

The former Northern Cape MEC for Transport, Roads and Public Works, who is currently serving a prison sentence, will be joined to the charge sheet as an accused.

Henderson pointed out that the parole hearing of the accused, who was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment for corruption and money laundering relating to government leases that were concluded with the Trifecta group of companies for office space, was due to be heard next week.

“The charges relating to the most recent arrests were laid by a DA member in Cape Town in 2020. Years after the allegations regarding the Kimberley mental hospital were discussed in Parliament and highlighted in auditor-general reports as ‘worrisome,’ no action was taken whatsoever, until this week,” said Henderson.

He added that the Gobodo Report,

which was compiled in 2012, had uncovered detailed information of blatant corruption, gross escalation in costs and fraud at the Kimberley mental hospital and was presented to Parliament.

“National Treasury compiled a report into the matter in 2020 and an entire dossier was also handed over to the Hawks for investigation. An investigation launched by the Scorpions was stymied following political intervention.

“Why only when the parole hearing of the second accused is to be heard, are accused persons suddenly being brought to court?”

He believed that the State was pursuing a prosecution against “low-hanging fruit”.

“The former HOD – Mokhali is sickly and on pension and has trouble remembering. The services of Babereki Consulting Engineers were terminated when he tried to stop a multimillion-rand payment to the contractor on site at the time. This is when the premier at the time intervened and instructed the Department of Transport, Roads and Public Works to honour payment that was processed on a Sunday.”

Henderson pointed out that the real benefactors of the mental hospital, including high-ranking politicians, a project manager, government officials and BEE partners, were being shielded from prosecution.

“While we cannot play with lives or corruption, it is nonsensical to waste state resources to pursue flimsy charges that are likely to collapse while the real culprits escape unscathed.”

