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State of police stations

Concern as many police stations in a state of demoralising 'disrepair'

The "state of disrepair" of many police stations has a negative impact on the morale of the officers. It also "portrays an unprofessional image" to the communities in which they serve.

This is according to a recent "legacy" report presented virtually to Parliament's portfolio committee on police last Wednesday.

The report, compiled to assist those taking over from the current committee, highlighted the South African Police Service's (SAPS) significant challenges with infrastructure development, the maintenance of police facilities and leasing.

"SAPS is heavily dependent on the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) for the construction, upgrade, and maintenance of police infrastructure. The deficiencies in the DPWI must be addressed at a national government level," the report read.

The committee recommended that the SAPS consider alternative methods of infrastructure and lease management to "lessen the dependency on the DPWI" and to "bring policing services closer to communities and improve the working conditions".

MP Brandon Golding (DA) said it was "imperative that we call these other agencies [like Public Works] to account. We need them to present a report because SAPS is being hamstrung by external issues".

Virgill Gericke (EFF) agreed with Golding.

"We cannot be business as usual.

The lack of involvement may contribute to the increase of crime in these areas," he said.

The report stated that departments should give feedback on the recommendations by May 15, 2024.

"These will be made available to the 7th Parliament to further guide oversight," it read.

The dilapidation of police buildings has been under the spotlight recently. At a meeting earlier this month, Police Minister Bheki Cele admitted that he had been working from home for the past four years due to the state of the Telkom Towers building in Pretoria.

This building was meant to be the national headquarters of SAPS. It was declared unfit for human use and was flagged by the auditor-general as a material irregularity. The auditor-general found that only one of nine buildings in the complex was ever occupied by SAPS.

In a statement, MP Sello Seithlo (DA), who sits on the portfolio committee of public works and infrastructure, called for a full review of the department's mandate.

"The state of the Telkom Towers is not a new issue as it was flagged by the Auditor-General in 2021," he said.

"Aside from the fact that money has been spent on the buildings, Public Works is still paying rent for SAPS at a number of properties that should have been vacated years ago had SAPS taken occupation of Telkom Towers," he said.

Public Works Minister Sihle Zikalala earlier this month told MPs that the department's forensic investigation into the Telkom Towers debacle would "start soon".

However, the Telkom Towers building remains closed since staff were evacuated in February.

Lieutenant General Tebello Mosikili during a briefing in Parliament last week said that some police members were still working from home "while they waited for office space from the DPWI".

The National Intervention Unit (NIU) office in Pretoria was also flagged by the police union, Solidarity.

Mosikili added that the repairs and maintenance of this building is the responsibility of Public Works.

— GroundUp.