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# National police headquarters declared unfit for human use

The national headquarters of SAPS in Pretoria has been declared unfit for human use and has also been flagged by the Auditor-General.

The Telkom Towers complex was purchased by Public Works in April 2016 for nearly R700 million, according to the office of the Auditor-General. But nearly eight years later, the complex has been underutilised and staff were recently evacuated from the premises due to safety concerns.

A presentation to MPs on Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure by the Auditor-General on Wednesday revealed that only one of the nine buildings in the complex has ever been used by SAPS.

Eight of the buildings have been vacant, costing the government at least R592 million. This has been flagged by the Auditor-General as a material irregularity.

Several MPs voiced concern that the matter had not been resolved despite their raising it on numerous occasions since 2019.

Just hours after the meeting in Parliament, SAPS released a statement confirming that staff had been evacuated



from the only building it had been using at the Telkom Towers.

The building will remain closed until further notice is given.

Meanwhile, in Parliament, the Auditor-General noted that 12 material irregularities had been identified in its report. Of these, eleven caused significant financial losses while the 12th was the misuse of public land.

Londolozza Songwevu, a senior au-

dit manager who led the presentation to the committee, said that four of these irregularities have been resolved as well as one that wasn't at Telkom Towers.

According to the Auditor-General, the buildings were fully functional at the time of purchase and were meant to become the central headquarters for SAPS in Pretoria. The complex was intended to alleviate the pressure

on the budget to lease private buildings. Songwevu said service delivery had been affected.

"Over and above those [financial] losses, service delivery is impacted in the sense that SAPS is unable to conduct their business as they would have envisaged when the move first came about," he said.

Songwevu said that they flagged the Telkom Towers as a material ir-

regularity late last year but wanted to give the new director-general time to respond to the matter.

At the end of the presentation, the Auditor-General made a few recommendations, which included that the portfolio committee "evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of consequence management [disciplinary] systems employed by the departments and entities to deal with instances of material irregularities".

The closure of the police headquarters happened after labour department officials accompanied by police management and Solidarity trade union officials visited the building on Tuesday.

Johan Böning, of Solidarity, in a statement, described the deplorable state of the SAPS office. He said they had received several complaints from police members.

Some of the allegations included a lack of clean drinking water, poor and broken air conditioning and ventilation, broken and dirty toilets, closed and unmarked emergency exits, and broken lifts, among other issues (**see images**).

— GroundUp.