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SUSPENDED

## Right to Justice pursues private prosecution against Ayanda Dakela

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THE civil society organisation Right to Justice has confirmed that it will be pursuing a private prosecution against Ayanda Dakela, the suspended Head of Infrastructure at the National Department of Health, amid growing frustration over the state's failure to bring criminal charges despite serious allegations of misconduct.

This unprecedented move follows over a year of suspension without any formal criminal accountability. While multiple health department officials have been arrested and dismissed in recent months for procurement-related misconduct, Dakela remains uncharged, leading to criticism from anti-corruption activists and renewed calls for justice.

Right to Justice will meet with the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) today to request a 'nolle prosequi' certificate. If granted, it would allow the NGO to proceed



A PRIVATE prosecution against Ayanda Dakela, the suspended Head of Infrastructure at the National Department of Health, is being pursued. | Supplied

with criminal charges against Dakela independently of the State.

"Health officials are being charged left and right," said Siphehile Jele, Chairperson of Right to Justice.

"Yet Ayanda Dakela, who has been implicated in serious allegations, is still

walking free. He was suspended over a year ago, but we've seen no meaningful action since then. It's time to stop waiting for the state to do the right thing"

Dakela was suspended in March 2024 following a strongly worded letter from the department's Director-General, Dr Sandile Buthelezi, citing breaches of procurement protocols at the Independent Development Trust (IDT), acting beyond his delegated authority, and failure to disclose critical information during his hiring process.

In his suspension letter, Buthelezi said: "The Department has ultimately come to a decision that, in light of the seriousness of the allegations against you and to avoid possible interference with the investigation or potential witnesses, you are hereby suspended from employment with immediate effect."

Dakela previously held roles at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and was seconded to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

His secondment was abruptly ter-

minated by the then minister Patricia de Lille, who accused him of overstepping boundaries and issuing unauthorised communications on official letterhead.

Despite the allegations, Dakela maintains his innocence. In a previous written response to *The Star*, he claimed he was targeted for rejecting a questionable procurement deal. "I was borrowed to assist with Infrastructure Delivery Management," Dakela said.

"I simply did my job and drafted a technical directive when asked. But because I refused to support irregular procurement. I was punished."

He also disputes the legal basis for his suspension, stating that his secondment was terminated without charges being laid in accordance with labour laws.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health confirmed to *The Star* that Dakela's matter "has not been concluded" and that "the evidence will speak for itself." The case comes amid a broader crackdown on corruption in

the public health sector.

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) recently concluded its inquiry into nine senior officials from the Gauteng Department of Health and Department of Infrastructure Development, leading to multiple dismissals over irregularities in the R500 million refurbishment of the AngloGold Ashanti Hospital in 2022. The SIU found that supply chain policies were bypassed and misleading information was given to justify massive expenditures. In total, five officials were dismissed, while others received final warnings or had their contracts terminated.

The probe was launched under Proclamation No. R. 23 of 2020, which empowered the SIU to investigate procurement abuses during the COVID-19 National State of Disaster.

Right to Justice says its push for private prosecution is about restoring public faith. "Too often, those at the top escape justice while scapegoats below take the fall," said Jele. "We won't allow this case to be quietly buried."