



**07 December 2022**

**Memorandum: Anti-Corruption Picket – Standing up to Health Sector Corruption**

**Attention: Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi**

**Cc: Office of the Speaker – Gauteng legislature**

Today, Defend our Democracy and a number of other civil society representatives stand outside the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, echoing the plight of thousands of people from various parts of the country who rely on public healthcare in our province.

We express the concern that many feel about the debilitating public healthcare system, which is under severe strain.

It both worries and angers us that that our health institutions, may be becoming sites of looting, corruption and state capture.

The crime of stealing from the poor, the ill and the marginalised in order to live lavish lifestyles, is atrocious. It takes a certain kind of depravity to steal money meant for medicine, life support systems, for hospital beds, and for more doctors and nurses to ease the strain on those already overworked in public health facilities.

Yet, we read reports about highly inflated tenders at Tembisa Hospital for items such as boerewors and skinny jeans! While people in public hospitals have no beds, the tenderpreneurs are allegedly buying upmarket homes in plush neighbourhoods in various parts of the country!

We have been closely following with serious concern News24's detailed investigations uncovering a web of suspicious deals worth hundreds of millions of Rands by tender tycoons who had their sights on Tembisa Hospital.

Recently, the media linked some of the above mentioned cases to information that slain whistleblower Babita Deokaran had flagged. Deokaran, like many other whistle-blowers, was failed and exposed in a dangerous manner without any protection.

Deokaran reportedly struggled to understand an R850 million spending splurge at Tembisa Hospital. She is said to have identified 1232 purchase orders in four months at the hospital, all under R500 000.

Anything above R500 000 would require a public tender process, and anything under, simply required the CEO's sign off.

One can clearly see the oversight and accountability loopholes that this system presents.



Defend our Democracy is deeply concerned that this method - which allegedly seems to be the way in which Tembisa Hospital was fleeced off millions - could potentially be used as a modus operandi at other public healthcare facilities.

We have previously raised concerns with the provincial government around the potential for corruption at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital after parts of facility were closed for refurbishment after a fire incident.

At the same time, doctors, whistle-blowers and organisations, have been vocal about the state of public healthcare at facilities such as Rahima Moosa and Helen Joseph Hospitals, and the serious backlogs at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

In light of this, it would be unconscionable to let the corrupt in the health sector off the hook.

As we mark Anti-Corruption Week (3-10 December 2022) and Whistleblower Protection Week we are therefore calling on the Gauteng Provincial Government, Gauteng Provincial Legislature and the Office of the Premier to:

- Update the public about the Special Investigating Unit's (SIU) investigation into alleged corruption at Tembisa Hospital. Where is this investigation and when can we expect its conclusion?
- Extend the investigations at Tembisa Hospital to all other Gauteng health facilities to ascertain if the same method of alleged looting is being employed elsewhere.
- Put in place measures that demand more stringent accountability and transparency for all procurement at public hospitals.
- Suspend tenders of any business currently under investigation by the SIU, or any other law enforcement or investigative unit.
- Freeze the assets of any business or individual currently under investigation at Tembisa Hospital.
- Blacklist businesses and owners found to be complicit in corruption.
- Fire public servants complicit in corruption and ensure that they face criminal charges.
- Work with the SIU and civil society organisations in developing a special health sector corruption whistleblower hotline, which is properly capacitated.
- Institute lifestyle audits on all hospital CEOs on a yearly basis.
- The Provincial Legislature must exercise its role in ensuring oversight and accountability over the Provincial Executive to ensure that it is fulfilling its responsibility in cleaning up corruption in the health sector
- Premier Lesufi, we urge you to ensure that Babita Deokaran's killing will not be in vain, but will prompt the Gauteng government to employ every effort to root out corruption from the healthcare sector.
- We hope that you will do what is in the interests of the public - especially the sick, the elderly and the infirm - and ensure that our hospitals are protected from the crooks, the corrupt and those without any conscience.

**We would appreciate a response to this memorandum by 14 December 2022**

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