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(Treasurer)

Jane Barrett

Fareed Abdullah

Moray Hathorn

Mark Heywood



Memorandum delivered to President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister of Health Dr Joe Phahla

Pretoria, 18 October 2021

The Treatment Action Campaign is marching today because the health system is in crisis. People wait for hours to be seen, only to be sent home empty handed or without all the medicines they need. Healthcare workers are overburdened and overstretched to breaking point. Doctors are scarce. Buildings are falling apart and equipment is missing. Hospitals are in shambles. Patients are found sleeping on corridor floors. Ambulances are scarce and unreliable. Community-led monitoring carried out by TAC and Ritshidze confirms the extent of this crisis at clinics and hospitals across the country. The dignity of poor people is being trampled upon every day. The reality is that our peoples' Constitutional right to healthcare is being violated.

HIV and TB remain a crisis. Every year there are still around 230,000 new HIV infections in South Africa and in the region of 83,000 HIV-related deaths. TB remains the leading cause of death in the country, killing 58,000 people in 2019. 36,000 of those people were living with HIV. To turn the tide on HIV and TB we need all government departments and all provinces to take this crisis seriously. We have the prevention and treatment tools to halt the HIV and TB crisis, but it continues when people are pushed out of care or avoid it in the first place because of conditions in the health system and the poor ways we are treated. Key populations, including men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who use drugs, and sex workers, face the worst indignities, being at times ridiculed, or even refused services, or even chased away from clinics altogether.

These challenges can be fixed, and they must be fixed urgently. While some progress is being made, we worry that it is too slow. HIV and TB is a crisis in our lives. We demand that the government treats it that way.

Underpinning the collapse of the health system is pervasive corruption and a dire lack of accountability of public officials. Corruption and theft of public funds is rife in the Department of Health at all levels. This takes away resources needed for quality healthcare delivery. Examples abound. The release of the SIU reports into the misuse of R1.2 billion from health department coffers between 2007 and 2012 under Brian Hlongwa's watch as well as the misuse of R150 million in the Digital Vibes saga under the watch of Dr Zweli Mkhize offer glimpses into the need for more stringent actions against perpetrators. Examples also include the SIU investigation into alleged misuse of COVID-19 funds by Dr Bandile Masuku, another former MEC for Health in the Gauteng province and the tragic assassination of Babita Deokaran when she was reported to have been a key witness in a corruption case.



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The consequences of corruption is the suffering of poor people. We have had enough of these daily indignities. The state has a duty to address the conduct of public officials that squander state resources including investigating and prosecuting crimes involving corruption. These officials should be held accountable. We demand that the government introduce strict measures to prevent corruption and to prosecute all those responsible for theft of public funds meant for provision of healthcare.

We call on you as State President to act quickly to bring all perpetrators of corruption and financial mismanagement and maladministration to book, including former Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize and former Health MECs Brian Hlongwa and Dr Bandile Masuku.

We call on the Minister of Health to suspend all officials implicated in the Digital Vibes corruption scandal with immediate effect and to open criminal cases against them. We demand to know what systems will be put in place to recoup this money stolen from the health department.

We also demand that there be an urgent turnaround of the collapse of the health system. If not, we will hold the President and the health department accountable for their indifference to the suffering of poor people.

We will not rest until we have an adequate response to all concerns. If the President and Minister of Health do not take our demands seriously, we will be back here in our numbers. We will protest in ways you have never seen before. It is time to deliver on your Constitutional mandate, or face the consequences.

Signed on 18 October 2021

Signed: President Cyril Ramaphosa

Signed: Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phahla

Signed: TAC General Secretary, Anele Yawa