

MEDIA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEHAWU INFURIATED BY THE ENDANGERMENT OF WORKERS LIFE BY GAUTENG GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Wednesday November 29, 2017

The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] is infuriated by the actions of both the Gauteng Department of Human Settlement and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional affairs that seeks to put in danger the lives of workers who work at their offices after the building was order to be closed as it is considered a health risk.

The building in question is the Bank of Lisbon Building situated at 37 Sauer Street in Johannesburg. The building houses three departments namely, COGTA, Human Settlement and the Department of Health. Five of our shop stewards were suspended in November 2015 for raising alarm about health hazards in the building. They were suspended for 18 months for highlighting issues of lack ventilation, broken lifts, dust, dirty carpets and broken ceilings.

Three weeks back the building was flooded after the toilets were blocked and this led to the drenching of offices in sewerage. The toilets were closed leaving workers with no facilities to relieve themselves. The building is under renovations while they try fix the ventilation, toilets, tiling and cracked walls. During these renovations workers safety is not taken into consideration like giving them helmets or keeping them away from areas where they might be falling debris.

The Department of Labour came to assess the state of the building and evaluate the safety of workers in the building. After the assessment they issued a Prohibition Notice under the occupational health and safety act of 1993 thus declaring the building not safe for occupation. According to the notice workers are not supposed to enter the building up until it is declared safe for occupation. Furthermore, the notice instructs the two departments to stop operations from the building until they can provide safe drinking water, safe and free accessibility into the building, controlling of dust, adequate ventilation and guarantee working air condition systems.

The notice prohibits the occupation of the building while construction and renovations are ongoing yet these departments continues to force workers to works in these unsafe conditions. Complaints by workers have fallen on deaf ears and the departments refuse to take their health into consideration. As NEHAWU, we condemn any disregard of workers health and safety.

NEHAWU will write to the Department of Labour to make them aware of the disregarding of the prohibition notice by the two departments. If the directives of the notice are not adhered to by the end of business today we will be left with no

option but to instruct workers to stop working in the building up until both health and safety requirements are adhered to.

Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat

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