



Physical Address: Crownwood Office Park, 100 Northern Parkway, Ormonde 2091

Tel: 011 492 1537 | Cell: 084 253 2682 | Fax: 086 518 7973 | Email: info@haitu.org.za | Website: www.haitu.org.za

HAITU demands that government must compensate families for unnecessary deaths caused by loadshedding!

Press Statement
8 February 2023

The Health and Allied Workers Indaba Trade Union (HAITU) is raising the alarm on the rapid deterioration of health standards, caused by persistent loadshedding and water shortages in all public health facilities. It is shameful that our government is so complacent about ending loadshedding, which is an issue which is literally resulting in scores of unnecessary deaths in state hospitals. Every day HAITU is getting painful reports from nurses on the ground regarding shocking conditions that they are forced to endure because of water and power shortages. Nurses and doctors are forced to make terrible choices over who lives and dies, simply because if the power cuts, and the ventilators cut out, there are simply not enough staff to resuscitate all the patients who depend on life saving equipment. Can you imagine the impact of loadshedding in a neo-natal ward where babies are depending on ventilators to keep them alive?

What is happening in our hospitals on a daily basis is devastating and the state is doing nothing to fix this crisis! Healthcare workers are so depressed, and so despondent because there is no sense of urgency from the state to take us out of this disaster. The ANC government has done nothing because as long as the people who are dying are Black and poor, they do not care. If loadshedding was affecting private healthcare facilities, the way it is affecting public hospitals, a solution would have been found by now.

We have noted with keen interest how this selfish government has responded to business by promising to compensate them for their financial losses, caused by loadshedding. Our government always prioritizes business over Black lives. We demand that the state must compensate the families of the working class for the deaths of their loved ones who died needlessly because of power cuts.

To this end HAITU is calling on the National Department of Health to record daily reports on the number of patients who die every day as a result of loadshedding, and to make those reports available to the public. They used to do this during the covid-19 pandemic where we received daily updates on the rate of infections and deaths caused by the virus. This program must be implemented for loadshedding as well so that we can hold executives and the board of Eskom management responsible for loadshedding.

HAITU has previously demanded that all hospitals and public health care facilities must be exempt from loadshedding. Currently, only 77 hospitals are exempt from loadshedding, out of 400 public health care facilities in the entire country. It is a disgrace that the government has allowed Eskom to collapse to this point, forcing healthcare workers to operate under such strenuous conditions.

Furthermore, the Loadshedding Register is important because we must use it to take steps to hold individuals in the state and at Eskom responsible for these deaths. Not too long ago we had an enquiry on Life Health Esidimeni, to analyse the role played by officials in that disaster, when 140 patients died as a result of neglect by the state. The impact that loadshedding has had is even worse, and it has resulted in even more unnecessary deaths, and it about time that those appointed in leadership positions to deal with this crisis, are dealt with. This means government officials, including the minister of the Department of Public Enterprises, the Department of Minerals and Energy, as well as the board and executive management of Eskom, must publicly account for the mess that they created, and severe consequences must follow.

HAITU is part of the court action to force the state to stop loadshedding!

This is why HAITU is part of the court action to force the state to stop loadshedding, and to immediately exempt all hospitals, clinics and healthcare facilities from rolling blackouts. In our application to the court we are also demanding that the court set aside the decision to increase electricity tariffs by 18.65%. The majority of the working class cannot afford to pay increased tariffs for electricity. Healthcare workers are already earning very low salaries and they struggle to take care of their families' on their meagre earnings so an increase on the electricity tariff would have a severe impact on our members.

HAITU is the only healthcare union which takes the issue of loadshedding seriously to the point where we have joined this application with NUMSA, BOSA and the UDM, together with civil society groups, and small business. We will be in court later this month to give evidence on the impact of loadshedding on the healthcare system and how this is destroying public health. HAITU will also be participating in protests to end loadshedding and we will mobilize our members to participate in shut downs, in order to demand that the state acts with urgency to resolve this crisis.

The lack of reliable energy is a matter of life and death, and we are fed up with the sluggish response from the government, in the face of the biggest disaster, since the covid-19 pandemic hit our shores.

ENDS.

For more information please contact:

Lerato Mthunzi

General Secretary of HAITU

0842532682

0114921537

leratomthunzi@ynitu.org.za

www.ynitu.org.za

Rich Sicina

President of HAITU

0769017903

0114921537

richsicina@ynitu.org.za

www.ynitu.org.za