

Govt thanks volunteers at clinics, hospitals

Pretoria - Government has thanked those South Africans who have heeded the call to volunteer and assist at state hospitals and clinics during the public service strike.

"Government thanks all South Africans who have volunteered their valuable time to assist the health authorities to ensure that the sick can still receive urgently needed medical attention," said Government spokesperson Themba Maseko on Monday.

He said government had also noted that private companies had made their facilities available to state hospitals. At the weekend a health company used its vehicles to transport patients, mostly sick children, to private facilities.

Members of the public were last week called to assist at state hospitals and clinics after public servants embarked on industrial action. In some areas, the South African Military Health Services have been called in to help to ensure that facilities remain open to provide services.

According to media reports, many patients some of whom were babies were left unattended with no food or medical care. There have also been reports of hospital staff being unable to report for duty because of intimidation by striking employees.

"Government is monitoring the strike and we are extremely concerned about the violence and intimidation that continues to characterise the strike in parts of the country. Reports about the intimidation of workers, particularly nurses and teachers, who do not want to be part of the strike are being investigated and those responsible for these acts will face the full might of the law," said Maseko.

He did not have exact figures on how many essential services staff had abandoned their posts during the strike, saying only that a number of hospitals and clinics had been affected.

"Public servants who are employed in essential services are required by law to be back at their posts without any further delay, as they were not supposed to participate in the strike," he said.

On Saturday, the Labour Court granted government an interdict prohibiting those employed in essential services from participating in the public servants strike. The interdict also prevents workers from participating in unlawful acts such as intimidation, assault, victimisation of non-striking workers and members of the public including patients at hospitals and scholars and teachers at school.

Dedicated courts have already been set up to deal with cases of transgressions related to the strike.

"The dedicated courts will ensure that those who are apprehended for illegal acts and for defying the court interdict are prosecuted speedily," said Maseko, who added that 64 arrests had been made in KwaZulu-Natal.

He added that government also wished to thank members of the police force and Defence Force for their dedication and hard work during the strike. - BuaNews