

AfriForum attempts to halt State's NHI plans — Vryheid Harald 30

November 2019

A report allegedly indicated KZN DoH incurred irregular expenditures of almost R1,4-billion.

On Thursday, AfriForum laid criminal charges against officials from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health (DoH). This was part of the organisation's national campaign against the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, which the Government intends to implement.

The NHI Bill was introduced at a National Assembly and its introduction was published in the Government Gazette No. 42598 of July 26 of this year, by the Minister of Health.

AfriForum alleged DoH officials were guilty of offences in terms of Section 86(1) of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act No 1 of 1999).

During the week of November 18 to 22, the organisation visited all nine provinces, during which criminal charges were laid against each of the heads of each provincial DoH.

A report allegedly indicated KZN DoH incurred irregular expenditures of almost R1,4-billion, and almost R3,2-million in 'fruitless and wasteful' expenditures in the 2017/2018 financial year.

In a media statement, AfriForum stated 'irregular expenditures comprise all expenses that are inconsistent with what the Act prescribes, and fruitless and wasteful expenditures are expenses made in vain but could have been prevented if reasonable precaution had been taken'. It added unauthorised expenditures were all expenses 'incurred contrary to the approved budget'.

According to AfriForum, these excessive expenditures could have been prevented had DoH leadership fulfilled its duties.

Outside the Vryheid Police Station, Eugene van Aswegen, AfriForum's KZN District Coordinator said, "The squandering of taxpayers' money is a national crisis and the responsible parties should be brought to book. That is why we laid these charges today. This misappropriation of funds is one of the main reasons why we cannot rely on the government to implement NHI: they have shown they cannot be trusted with taxpayers' money."

The South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) released a press statement on November 19, in which it also voiced objection to the NHI Bill.

The IRR believes that NHI would be 'the end of healthcare in South Africa as we know it'.

It further referred to NHI as an 'Eskom situation', alleging just how the State's management of Eskom led to load-shedding, the management of NHI would lead to 'life-shedding'.

Campaigns Coordinator for the IRR, Hermann Pretorius added, "As always, South Africans will step up to save the country from the failures inflicted on it by politicians. Together, we can stop the NHI – we must."

Public hearings for KZN took place at the weekend in Jozini, Ethekewini and Endumeni local municipal areas, and the period for public comment closes on November 29 (Friday).

Requests for comment from local DoH officials were directed to Agiza Hlongwane, from the KZN DoH's Corporate Communications division.

He asked for queries to be sent via email and at the time of going to print, responses were still being awaited.

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