

Unemployed doctors march to Union Buildings

By [Silver Sibiya](#)

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Scores of unemployed doctors, nurses and other health workers marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on Monday, 27 February 2024, calling for the Presidency to intervene in the ongoing financial problems facing the health sector.



Source: [Pexels](#)

One of their main demands is for the health budget to be increased to absorb about 800 medical professionals.

Joining the march, Mandla Matshabe, said he never imagined being unemployed when he completed his community service at Sefako Makgatho University in December last year after studying in Cuba.

“Now I’m sitting at home with a medical qualification when there is a dire need. It’s appalling to think there are medical professionals at home,” he said.

Matshabe, who lives in Hazyview in Mpumalanga, said many unemployed health workers were becoming depressed at home. He said hiring qualified doctors could help alleviate some of the burnout among doctors in the public sector.

“Doctors in communities are overburdened because we don’t have enough medical professionals, including physiotherapists and dieticians or everyone in the hospital,” he said.

From aspirations to adversity

University of Cape Town graduate Lerato Jaca said it was discouraging to be an unemployed doctor. “I come from KwaNzimakwe in Port Shepstone where there were literally no doctors when I was growing up.”

Jaca was raised by an unemployed single mother who relied on the money she made during Jaca’s three-year community service employment at Ermelo Hospital.

She said they now rely on her brother’s disability grant and his children’s child support grants to buy food.



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Deputy President of the South African Medical Association, Nkateko Minisi, said: “Other health professionals in the allied sectors, including pharmacy, are here with us to hand over a memorandum to build up the health system. But to do so, we feel that human capital must be optimised by hiring all these unemployed professionals. Not tomorrow, not next week but now!” she said.

Mnisi said more than 80% of the population depends on public health services. “Healthcare is not a privilege that should be enjoyed by some; it is a basic human right that every single person deserves.”

Communications manager at The Presidency, Phil Mahlangu accepted the group’s memorandum.

He said that the presidency was “immensely worried as the presidency about the negative issues affecting the medical industry”. He promised the protestors a response within a week.

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