

7 June 2017

Minister Aaron Motsoaledi  
Department of Health  
Private Bag X828, Petoria,0001  
South Africa

Dear Minister, Motsoaledi,

**HEALTH CARE FOR MIGRANTS: THE CASE OF MS FRANCINE NGALULA KALALA**

We write on behalf of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) which is the largest Psychology organisation in the country.

We learned with much dismay and concern about the experiences of Ms Francine Ngalula Kalala who was allegedly turned away from state hospitals in Gauteng while in labour and gave birth at Park Station, ostensibly because of her migrant status in our country. Since our information is based on media reports we recognise that there may be other pieces of information that we are not privy to, at this stage. Nevertheless, we wish to place on record PsySSA's concern about access to health care by all of the people in South Africa, regardless of national origin.

As a national professional society concerned with health care and well-being, it is very worrying that large numbers of people are being displaced on our continent, through no fault of their own. Thousands of innocent people, including children and others in vulnerable positions are in South Africa because of war, poverty or other oppressive conditions in their own countries. We believe that, as South Africans, we have a duty to provide refuge to these individuals and families, much as they did for our citizens during apartheid. With refuge, we must also provide healthcare when needed. PsySSA also previously raised the issue of schooling for children of migrant and refugee families when a problem in that regard arose in Gauteng last year.

Our government is a signatory to international agreements and principles that have been established regarding health care for refugees, including those articulated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, apart from simply the need to adhere to these documented principles, it is vital that we, as a country, express our compassion and concern for the vulnerable families who have sought refuge in our country. We also fear that health care refusal by government workers could have the undesirable effect of fuelling public xenophobic responses which could then appear justified or misinterpreted as government policy.

We know and respect your excellent record in matters of social justice and human rights and, therefore, feel confident that the Department of Health representatives will be informed accordingly, should there be a lack of clarity in some institutions regarding access to health care.

PsySSA would like to express its commitment to health care for all in South Africa and is, therefore, available for input and collaboration should that be needed at any stage.

Sincerely,



Prof Sumaya Laher  
President of the Psychological Society of South Africa