



National Prosecuting Authority  
South Africa

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **OUTCOME OF THE LIFE ESIDIMENI TRAGEDY INQUEST AND DECISION TO PROSECUTE**

Pretoria – The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) confirms that, following years of investigation and legal processes, a decision has been taken to prosecute individuals implicated in the tragic deaths of mental healthcare users during the Life Esidimeni transfers.

The Life Esidimeni tragedy, which unfolded between 2015 and 2016, resulted in the deaths of at least 141 vulnerable psychiatric patients after their unlawful removal from licensed care facilities to unregistered and ill-equipped NGOs. The matter has since stood as one of the most serious human rights violations in democratic South Africa.

For nearly a decade, families of the deceased have endured prolonged delays in the pursuit of justice. These delays were occasioned by the complexity of the case, the scale of the evidence, and the necessity of ensuring a thorough and legally sound process. The NPA acknowledges the pain and frustration experienced by affected families during this period. Delay in communicating the final decision taken by the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions was that it had to be endorsed by the NDPP who retired at the end of January 2026, and the incoming NDPP, Advocate A Mothibi had to be briefed about the decision.

After he was briefed, the NDPP, Advocate Mothibi has expressed his appreciation at the progress in this matter and that the affected families and public needed to be informed that the NPA has decided to institute prosecution in this matter.

The inquest proceedings, presided over by Judge Teffo, concluded with findings that several deaths were caused by negligence and systemic failures within the Gauteng Department of Health. The court further identified individuals whose conduct may give rise to criminal liability.

After careful consideration of the inquest findings, supporting evidence, and applicable legal standards, the NPA has resolved that there is sufficient basis to institute criminal prosecutions. The charges are expected to include culpable homicide, among others, against those deemed responsible for the unlawful and negligent actions that led to the deaths.

This decision marks a critical step toward accountability and justice for the victims and their families. The NPA reiterates its commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable in a court of law.

Further details regarding court dates and specific charges will be communicated in due course.

Issued by:

Lumka Mahanjana

NPA Regional Spokesperson

Gauteng Division: Pretoria

073 002 0000

[lmahanjana@npa.gov.za](mailto:lmahanjana@npa.gov.za)