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RESPONSE TO THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE'S STATEMENT ON A MARCH TO MAHATMA GANDHI MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Department of Health notes with dismay the stance taken by the Democratic Alliance's Mr. George Mari to disconnect (with racial intentions) the community of Phoenix from the rest of the population, in the Inanda KwaMashu and Ntuzuma, served by Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital.

In a statement issued today, Mr. Mari claims to be speaking for the 'Friends of Mahatma Gandhi Hospital', which a group is constituted by various civil society groupings whose main interest is to work with the Department towards ensuring that the hospital provides quality care and serves the communities it purports to serve. The 'Friends of Mahatma Gandhi Hospital' was recently formed and is chaired by the Chairperson of the Hospital Board, Mr. Sham Maharaj. Mr. Mari has always been invited and he has successfully failed to honour all invitations to meetings.

The Department is in the process of consulting all stakeholders in the hospital catchments' population to engage them on plans afoot to turn the situation at the hospital around. The plans include; (i) bringing to normality the working environment so that all workers are able to carry-out their work without fear or favour, (ii) arresting the free-for all situation where anyone who feels like saying something would invite the media, and political parties, into the hospital in disregard of existing prescripts, (iii) reversing the child and maternal mortality rates, (iv) instilling a culture of professionalism and proper work ethic among all staff members (v) improve the involvement of citizens in the governance and service provision decision making process, and (vi) ensuring that the institution functions as optimally as it can.

Addressing the clinical service delivery challenges cannot be successful if the conditions are as they are, believes the Department. It is for this reason that the department is in the process of building lasting partnerships with the citizens so that we are able to respond to their health needs. We also need to recognize that the bedrock of our service delivery is our health care workers. They, too, must play a meaningful role in this turnaround process. It will not happen overnight and it will require concerted efforts from everyone, especially the health care seekers.

Ends

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