



MINISTRY
EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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MEDIA STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“THE LABOUR LAWS OF THE REPUBLIC ARE NOT JUST NICE TO HAVE, THEY MUST BE COMPLIED WITH” - MINISTER NOMAKHOSAZANA METH

The Minister of Employment and Labour, Ms. Nomakhosazana Meth and Johannesburg Executive Mayor, Cllr Dada Morero, led a high-impact, multi-disciplinary joint-blitz inspection at the Johannesburg inner city on Friday, 21 August 2026. The joint operation conducted in partnership with the City of Johannesburg and other government authorities, forms part of Government’s effort to strengthen compliance with South Africa’s labour laws and municipality by-laws, in order to protect the rights of workers, as well as to ensure adherence to the environmental health and safety of the community.

At the first workplace inspected, Siesta MTN Butchery, Inspectors identified several areas of non-compliance with key labour laws. This led to the Department’s Inspectors issuing several prohibition notices in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety Act, for blocked walkways, no personal lockers for workers to store their clothes, inadequate facilities for workers to change, exposed electrical distribution boards and inadequate seating for cashiers. Inspectors found cashiers using crates as seats. Among these were the payment of workers below minimum wage, which led to contravention of Basic conditions of Employment Act and non-contribution of Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

The workers at the Butchery were initially found without the required personal protective equipment (PPE) and were instructed to wear the appropriate protective clothing. Officials also raised concerns about the storage and defrosting of meat products on the floor, saying that the proper procedure is for products to be moved from the freezer to the cold room for defrosting. The Department’s Occupational Health and Safety inspectors further found domestic animals, including cats, inside the building, on the upper level. Officials said the presence of animals inside the food premises is not permitted.

Due to these and non-compliance with the Environmental Health and Safety Act, the City of Joburg closed the butchery, effective immediately.

At Boxer Superstore, the inspection team engaged with workers and management, while assessing compliance with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and other applicable labour legislation. Minister Meth engaged directly with workers and management to gain an understanding of working conditions and assess whether employers were complying with labour legislation.

Minister Meth said the Department's inspections are aimed not only at enforcement, but also at educating and assisting employers to understand and meet their legal responsibilities. She said that the purpose of the inspections is not to close businesses, but to ensure that they operate within the law while protecting workers.

"Our approach is what we call a carrot and stick approach. We empower and educate businesses, identify areas where they need to improve and issue notices where necessary," said Minister Meth.

In addressing the concerns relating to the employment of foreign nationals and the availability of South African job seekers, Minister Meth said the Department has a database of more than seven million registered job seekers, including millions of young people and women, and called on employers to make use of available South African talent.

"We are saying to businesses, open up the space for South Africans. But we are not xenophobic. Foreign nationals who are legally in South Africa have the right to be employed. However, people who are in South Africa legally as visitors or students cannot simply take up employment without the necessary legal permission," said Minister Meth.

Minister Meth said the Department would continue working with other government institutions to enforce the country's laws and address areas of non-compliance.

With the inspections extending beyond labour matters, Officials from the City of Johannesburg's Building Development Management assessed whether businesses had approved building plans and complied with applicable building requirements.

Executive Mayor, Cllr Dada Morero said the city was willing to work with businesses to restore order and assist them to meet the required compliance standards.

"This joint operation with the Department of Employment and Labour is part of our ongoing commitment to reclaim and restore order in the Johannesburg inner city. We will not turn a blind eye to businesses that put workers' safety and dignity at risk, or that operate outside the law. Where we find non-compliance, we will act, and where businesses are willing to correct course, we will support them to do so. Our residents and workers deserve a city that protects them, said EM Morero."

Notices were issued where businesses were required to submit relevant documentation to the City for further assessment. Minister Meth reiterated that businesses have a responsibility to comply with the laws of the country, while government remains committed to supporting employers that want to comply and taking appropriate enforcement action where non-compliance is identified.

"The laws of the Republic are not a nice-to-have. We all have the responsibility to comply with the law. We want businesses to continue operating and contribute to the economy, however they must comply with the laws of the Republic," said Minister Meth.

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Media enquiries:

Ms. Thobeka Magcai, Ministry Spokesperson. Email: Thobeka.Magcai@Labour.gov.za
072 737 2205.

Ms. Khathutshelo Mulaudzi, Spokesperson City of Johannesburg. Email:
khathutshelomul@joburg.org.za 070 362 3295.

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