



GAUTENG PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

SUNDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

GAUTENG FORENSIC PATHOLOGY SERVICE SALVAGES FINGERPRINTS TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL INNER CITY FIRE VICTIMS

The Gauteng Department of Health is pleased that the investment made on the Forensic Pathology Digital Fingerprint System is yielding positive results.

The system has seen the Gauteng Forensic Pathology Service (FPS) managing to identify additional people from the 62 unidentifiable victims of the Johannesburg inner-city building fire incident.

Salvaged fingerprints of the deceased were processed through the digital fingerprint system to identify 11 more people. After autopsies were done and the deceased cleaned, further body examinations were done where another 7 bodies were identified by families through various features such as tattoos and other body marks. This means 18 more bodies were identified, bringing the number of identifiable bodies to 30 when combined with the 12 that were originally identifiable. The number of unidentifiable bodies is now 44.

As of Sunday, 10 September 2023, 76 families have presented at the Diepkloof Forensic Pathology Service mortuary in Soweto to report their loved ones which has resulted in a line list of 74 names that possibly perished in the Johannesburg inner-city fire being developed. The fire has since claimed 77 people, 3 of which died in hospital.

The South African Police Service Victim Identification Centre unit has drawn 38 Antemortem swabbing from the families and is currently doing cross referencing of these to the DNA samples from the unidentifiable bodies as part of linking families with their deceased loved ones. The number of bodies collected have since increased from 12 to 20 as of Friday, 08 September 2023.

Only 27 patients remain admitted at various hospitals – Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, Helen Joseph Hospital, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital and Tembisa Hospital.

The Gauteng Provincial Government has availed a hotline number for families to make enquiries through the toll-free hotline number on 0800 203 886 or direct line during office hours on 0113553048/ 0112415707. Alternatively at they can visit the Diepkloof mortuary, which is located at 2 Collinder Road Berthsam, Diepkloof, Soweto (Behind Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital).

Meanwhile, in July 2023 Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi together with MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko unveiled the digital fingerprint system to be used to identify deceased bodies at the 11 FPS mortuaries in the province.

This digital innovation has helped to improve the quality of fingerprints collected as it uses biometric scanners and third-party access to the databases of Department of Home Affairs, South African Police Service and National Credit Bureau to identify deceased bodies.

On Friday, 08 September the Premier and the MEC held a meeting with Southern African Development Countries to look at the urgent need to link the digital fingerprint system with SADC population registers as a lasting solution in addressing the problem of undocumented immigrants at forensic pathology services mortuaries.

Ends/

Issued by the Gauteng Department of Health

For more information please contact:

Motalatale Modiba, Head of Communication: 064 803 0808 or healthmediaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za	Tshepo Shawa, Spokesperson for the MEC for Health: 072 222 6333 or Tshepo.Shawa@gauteng.gov.za
--	---

For media releases, speeches and news visit the Gauteng Department of Health's portal at www.gauteng.gov.za