

covid-19 12.4.2020 09:28 am

Lamola responds to article about Sun City prison 'pretending' to be Covid-19 ready



Citizen reporter



Inmates are seen sitting at the male section of the Johannesburg Correctional Centre also known as Sun City Prison, South Africa, on April 8, 2020. (Photo by Michele Spatari / AFP)

According to a Sunday Times investigation, the hand sanitiser at Johannesburg Prison is nothing but water and few if any preventative measures are actually in place to prevent a devastating outbreak.

After the Sunday Times [published an article](#) about how Johannesburg Prison, popularly known as Sun City, had only put on a fake show of preparedness against the coronavirus – including water disguised as hand sanitiser – the department of justice and correctional services has responded with a long statement.

The Sunday Times reported that they had not been given any responses in time for publication by department spokesperson Chrispin Phiri, though the department says the “publication had not considered our response”.

The article alleges that prison officials “staged an elaborate charade” on Wednesday to “fool” Minister of Justice and Correctional Services Ronald Lamola when he inspected the prison for its preparedness and protocols against the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

While Lamola was there, staff were wearing gloves and masks and screening visitors, but this apparently all ended as soon as he and his entourage left, and the hand sanitiser in use had apparently not even been real anyway.

The prison has more than 9,500 inmates and 1,000 staff and any outbreak of the disease within its walls would likely be devastating.

Sunday Times journalists were able to enter Sun City on Friday without being screened or sanitised and they witnessed visitors mingling with officials, allegedly without enough social distancing, they reported.

“Staff said new inmates were admitted without health screening and were not kept apart from the existing prison population,” the paper reported.

The prison apparently doesn't even have a thermometer.

The paper also saw a register suggesting that “more than 50 people entered the facility to make bail arrangements for inmates”.

In their response, the justice department disputed some of what the Sunday Times had reported. They insisted that they had procured enough PPE (personal protection equipment) and that “bulk distribution was effected across all centres in the country”.

Phiri said it was “fake news” that there was a shortage of PPEs.

He said the department was “focused on prevention, containment/treatment and disaster recovery”.

He, however, said they were unaware of prisoners doing duty without protective equipment, and asked the Sunday Times for “further clarity”.

He disputed several of “the allegations made” and insisted that “there has been screening at Johannesburg and supplies are being provided continuously, both for inmates and officials”.

“Improving personal and environmental hygiene, provision of personal equipment, sanitisation and decontamination interventions is what we have been doing and continue to do in Johannesburg ... where shortages are experienced, the department has a system in place to assist correctional centres in need of stock whilst awaiting delivery. Centres have a flexibility to share resources and we continue to engage with our officials and inmates.”

You can read the rest of the department's responses below in full.

[Response to Sunday Times April 12 2020](#) by [Charles Cilliers](#) on Scribd

(Compiled by Charles Cilliers)