



**NUMSA will approach the Labour Court in order to defend workers at Putco  
27 February 2024  
Press statement**

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) met with the management of Putco earlier today in an attempt to end the dispute. It is unfortunate that we were unable to find one another. The main reason the talks collapsed is because Putco wants to dictate to us on how to defend workers. Putco has demanded that we guarantee that the CCMA arbitration hearings are conducted and concluded by the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2024, or else, workers will not be paid their salaries whilst on suspension. The union cannot agree to this because there are at least 120 workers who must be defended. It is clear that Putco is attempting to sabotage our cases with this demand. If we were to adhere to this, dozens of workers would lose their jobs, because we would have failed to defend them adequately.

We must also state that it is unfair for Putco to make this demand. In October 2022 NUMSA offered to group the workers according to the charges they were facing and to defend them in groups. This would have drastically reduced the time spent on the hearings, however, Putco rejected this offer. They demanded that workers make submissions individually. They created this situation and now they want workers to suffer. We reject their attempts to deny workers their right to due process and a fair disciplinary hearing.

Furthermore, Putco is threatening to take us to court to force us to reduce the number of witnesses in the disciplinary hearing. We are ready to defend our members and their right to a fair trial. We will not be bullied into submission by lawyers.

NUMSA is also demanding the following:

1. We demand that workers who are currently on suspension for the 2022 unprotected strike, must *not* be compelled to report to Putco depositions. This requirement by the employer is a form of punishment and it is an abuse of power. Workers are being treated as objects and not as human beings. Putco unilaterally amended the terms of the settlement agreement by imposing this change on workers, and they did not consult NUMSA.
2. We demand that workers on suspension, who have been dismissed for taking sick leave, must be immediately re-instated. The Company has even dismissed those employees who had been hospitalised and they did so without any hearing whatsoever. We demand that Putco management immediately reverse this decision. It is outrageous and patently unfair to dismiss employees who are absent from work due to illness. So far 14 workers have been unfairly dismissed in this way.
3. Putco is threatening to withhold salaries for workers on suspension if we do not conclude the cases by the 5<sup>th</sup> of April. We want to remind them that they are bound by the terms of the Amended Settlement Agreement dated 06 October 2022, where they agreed to pay workers their remuneration during the period of suspension. Should the Company find this arrangement financially burdensome, it has the freedom to lift the

suspensions and utilize the services of workers productively, pending the finalisation of the CCMA arbitration process.

If Putco does not respond to these demands, we will have no choice but to approach the Labour court in order to enforce the rights of workers to be treated fairly.

Aluta continua!  
The struggle continues!  
Issued by Irvin Jim

NUMSA General Secretary

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