



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
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27 November 2024

Honourable President Cyril Ramaphosa
President of South Africa

Per email: president@presidency.gov.za / malebo@presidency.gov.za / president@po.gov.za

RE: Request for a SIU Investigation into fraud within the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) grant system

Dear President Ramaphosa,

In light of the discovery by two Stellenbosch University students of allegations of wide-scale fraud within the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant system, it is imperative that I write to you regarding ongoing fraud at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the dire impact it has on millions of vulnerable citizens.

On the 23rd October 2023 Mr Joel Cedras and Mr Veer Gosai briefed the Portfolio Committee on Social Development on their methodology, legal frameworks used, findings as well as their recommendations into allegations of fraud within the SRD grant system. Their findings shocked the country and is well documented in the news and media. In short, fraudsters exploited SASSA's vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the system, applied for SRD grants using the stolen identities (numbers) from primarily unsuspecting youth and received the R370 into various bank accounts or via cash send, locking them out of the grant despite being eligible.

Since inviting the public to share their experiences regarding allegations of fraud within the SRD R370 grant, the Democratic Alliance has received over 258 emails from South Africans nationwide supporting these findings.

If I can share just one of the examples:

"I have three nephews and one niece who had just turn eighteen years old who tried to apply for srd grant, and the system says "application already active" but they didn't applied.

Early January we called SASSA customer care to report this, the agent told us to give him the details of application so that they will send then to head office so that they can be cancelled.

After cancellation they will send us text message so that we can reapply but till today we have not received any text message."

Honourable Mr President, unfortunately the Department of Social Development (DSD) as well as SASSA's response to these findings has been found wanting.

SASSA was ill prepared to respond the portfolio committee on the 23rd October 2024, citing their presentation would be inadequate. A concerning response when SASSA has on numerous occasions admitted fraud within the SRD grant is not new and the findings of the university students had dominated the news and media platforms since the 14th October 2024.

The Minister for Social Development, Honourable Minister Tolashe, requested an additional 30 days to conduct an investigation into the matter. DSD and SASSA returned to the portfolio committee today, 27th November 2024, their findings substantiated that of the university students and more. There are multiple vulnerabilities and weaknesses which have left the grant system exposed to exploitation resulting in many eligible South Africans being locked out of the social grant.

The payment of social grants accounts for approximately 96% of the DSD's annual budget. SASSA will receive R266 billion rand for this financial year. Since the inception of the SRD grant in May 2020, government has spent approximately R40 billion annually.

These are funds, derived from hardworking taxpayers, are meant to bring dignity to the millions of marginalised and vulnerable South Africans, not for criminals who belong behind bars. Stealing from the most vulnerable is the lowest form criminality. To take food off the table of the destitute.

Honourable, Mr President, in light of the above the Democratic Alliance requests you issue an urgent Presidential Proclamation to the Special Investigating Unit, an independent statutory body, to investigate the widescale fraud into the social grant system: the SRD grant as well as other statutory grants.

As public office bearers we have a shared commitment to improve the lives of marginalised and vulnerable South African citizens. An independent investigation will bring transparency, restore public confidence, and mend the reputation of the social assistance framework which is at the very heart of the social contract.

I look forward to your timely response.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

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Hon. Alexandra Abrahams

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