

Poor state of military health service

The breakdown of the military ambulance transporting former president Nelson Mandela to hospital showed the poor state of the military health service, the DA said on Sunday (23 June).



Former President Nelson Mandela (Image: Wikimedia)

"Generally, there are serious problems in the provision of health services to the forces and their families," Democratic Alliance MP David Maynier said in a statement.

"The level of professional health support at bases and units is inadequate and under severe pressure due to under-staffed posts, the non-availability or shortage of doctors, inadequate facilities, inadequate equipment and lack of military ambulances," he said.

Maynier said he would write to Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula to ask that a board of inquiry be appointed to investigate the incident.

On Saturday (22 June), the presidency confirmed that the military ambulance which transported Mandela to hospital two weeks ago had broken down because of "engine problems".

"All care was taken to ensure that Madiba's medical condition was not compromised by the unforeseen incident," spokesman Mac Maharaj said.

Hospitalisation

"Doctors attending to Madiba are satisfied that the former president suffered no harm during this period," he said.

Mandela, 94, was hospitalised on June 8 with a recurring lung infection.

Maharaj said the fully-equipped military ICU (intensive care unit) ambulance had specialised medical staff on board, including intensive care specialists and ICU nurses. It was accompanied by two quick response vehicles.

Last week, US-based CBS News reported that Mandela's liver and kidneys were functioning at 50% and that the ailing former statesman had undergone two procedures, one to repair a bleeding ulcer and another to insert a tube.

According to the report, Mandela had not opened his eyes in days and was unresponsive.

Report

"Our reports are based on the reports we receive from doctors. We avoid clinical details because we want to ensure no transgression into the privacy of Mandela and his family is ensured," Maharaj said.

"The presidency needs to ensure the dignity of the former president and needs to ensure the circumstances are not surrounded by undignified, speculative reports."

He said on Saturday that the update that Mandela was in a "serious but stable" condition still stood. On Monday (24 June) he was reported to be in a critical condition.

Family members have been seen entering and leaving the Medi-Clinic Heart Hospital in Pretoria for the last two weeks.

Last week, Mandela's grandson Ndaba Mandela was quoted in The Star as saying Mandela was expected to be discharged "soon".

Ndaba said the family was grateful for Madiba's life and was not ready to contemplate his death.

"Only God can take him but for us, as family, as long as he can still hear and understand what is said to him and talk to us, we'll continue to celebrate him," Ndaba added.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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