**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES MINSTER COMMITTED TO ASSISTING**
**ALL #FEESMUSTFALL PROTESTERS WHO WANT ASSISTANCE**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 16 October 2019 –**The Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services today received clarity from the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services on comments he made on social media regarding applications for presidential pardon and expungement of criminal records regarding the #FeesMustFall accused.

Minister Ronald Lamola told the committee in his political overview that he has on previous occasions indicated that he was looking at what type of assistance were students who formed part of the protest receiving? “I made it clear there is no blanket amnesty. Everyone must apply. We made the same offer to Kanya Cekeshe. He has since applied for leave to appeal, so any presidential pardon application cannot happen at this stage. We remain available to assist any of the Fees Must Fall protesters.”

Cekeshe was convicted of malicious damage to property when he tried to set a police van alight during the protests. among other charges.

The committee heard that it is critical that the justice system be digitised in order for courts to function optimally. This will streamline the processes. This will also improve the experience of victims. The Minister emphasised that the system of work needs to be improved. Special focus will also be given to cases of sexual violence, domestic violence and the emerging threat of cybercrimes. He informed the committee that 90 court rooms were adapted for sexual offences cases up to now, and a further 10 is expected in this financial year.

Committee Chairperson, Mr Bulelani Magwanishe, said the committee noted the improvements that the Minister has in the pipeline. “These planned improvements must be welcomed. Anything that will make it easier for South Africans to access justice must be applauded. We note the plans on sexual offences, domestic violence and femicide. This is critical as South Africans want to see improvements regarding this matter urgently.”

The Minister raised concern about the high vacancy rate. He said the department is in need of skilled administrators to ensure that access to justice is a reality. He assured the committee that all senior management posts will be filled by competent staffers.

In terms of corruption, the committee was informed that R102 million was given to the National Prosecuting Authority to do its work without fear or favour. He assured the committee that several mutual legal assistance agreements and extradition treaties have been signed in order to deal with corruption. He informed the committee that those who looted state coffers have sophisticated networks around the world, and all the assistance available is needed to ensure this is dealt with effectively.

Mr Magwanishe said the committee will closely monitor how corruption cases are dealt with, as well as the filling of positions. “The filling of positions is crucial in ensuring that South Africans are able to access justice and receive the quality service they deserve.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MR BULELANI MAGWANISHE.**