

Memorandum to the President of South Africa

From: South African Express Employees

**Subject: Appeal for payment of unpaid salaries and retrenchment of all staff before liquidation**

Mr President – We, the employees of SA Express, appeal to you: **Please pay us what is due to us.**

SA Express will be the first State Owned Enterprise to die. It will die through neglect and mismanagement, but mostly, it will die because the Department of Public Enterprise did not look after it and provide it with properly qualified, competent and honest board members and senior management.

The final liquidation hearing for SA Express is set down for Tuesday 9 June 2020. But before this happens, there are a few things you should know.

1. SA Express employees were last paid their salaries on 25 February 2020.
2. In the 100 days since the 25th of February, SA Express employees have received no income except the one Covid-TERS payment. For most employees this did not even cover the outstanding medical aid contributions to remain members of their medical aid fund. Contributions which the BRPs neglected to pay for February and March 2020, along with pension and provident fund contributions, which were also not paid over, although it was subtracted from employee salaries in February.
3. Employees were warned one day before March salaries were due that there would be a "Delay in payment of March 2020 staff salaries". Those salaries have still not been paid.
4. Employees ended up forming social media groups, through which donated food parcels could be distributed to those in most need and co-workers who still had income from a family member, donated food-vouchers to their colleagues during the Level 5 lockdown to avoid starvation.
5. If SA Express is allowed to be liquidated before employees are retrenched, it means that access to pension and provident funds will be held up for months, if not years, in liquidation.
6. DPE never provided any post-commencement funding to SA Express, although they assisted SAA to be funded.
7. DPE has, in principle, agreed to fund retrenchment at SAA for excess staff to the tune of R2 billion, but refuses to even mention a plan for SA Express and seems to have abandoned SA Express employees to whatever liquidation produces. **This is unethical and unfair in the extreme.**
8. SAA still owes SA Express R47 million in flown tickets, enough for almost two months' salaries.

9. It has become obvious that the "New SAA" will not include any part of or employees of SA Express, despite initial promises that the three airlines (SAA, SA Express and Mango) would be merged.

Mr President, over the past two months we have listened to you and your cabinet tell South Africa that we are in this together and that companies must try and avoid job-losses and continue to look after their employees, despite not trading or under reduced trading. Why is it that the Department of Public Enterprise is not held to the same standard? Why should SOE employees be abandoned to a catastrophically wounded job-market without even the salaries due to them, never mind retrenchment packages which would help them survive until they can find jobs?

Mr President, we, the 691 remaining SA Express employees, request the following:

1. Pay SA Express employees their outstanding salaries.
2. Retrench SA Express employees and pay retrenchment packages as required by Labour Law.
3. Delay liquidation of SA Express until the staff have been properly retrenched and outstanding salaries paid through funding from DPE. This will enable faster access to pension and provident fund money for employees and avoids these funds being caught up in liquidation and subject to further management fees.

**We are saddened that your government has allowed our company to fail through neglect and mismanagement. This is your failure, not ours and all we want now is to be treated fairly, decently and with respect and paid what is due to us.**

On behalf of the employees of SA Express.