

26 May 2020

Dr Z. Mkhize, MP
Minister of Health
Office of the Minister
Private Bag X828
PRETORIA
8001

By email: minister@health.gov.za, DG@health.gov.za, MajaP@health.gov.za

Dear Dr Mkhize

REGULAR RELEASE OF COVID-19-RELATED INFORMATION

AfriForum is a not-for-profit civil rights organisation with almost 240 000 members. We received countless queries from the public and our members about information relating to COVID-19.

In his address to the nation on 13 May 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa said:

We are determined and committed: ... to be transparent, to take the nation into confidence and to do so regularly; to continue to be forthright on the state of the pandemic. ...

However, basic information about the course of COVID-19 in the country is, contrary to the President's statement, still not released to the public regularly. It is imperative that information be released regularly so that citizens can understand the situation around COVID-19 and to enable organisations like ourselves to answer questions that are foremost in the minds of the public. We request that at least the following information is released and/or updated daily:

1. The total number of COVID-19 cases per age group
2. The total number of COVID-19 deaths per age group
3. The comorbidities of every death that is reported as a COVID-19-related death
4. The total number of confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 cases
5. The total number of confirmed asymptomatic COVID-19 cases
6. The total number of COVID-19 tests performed per province
7. The total number of COVID-19 patients per province who are hospitalised
8. The total number of COVID-19 patients per province who are discharged from hospital
9. The total number of COVID-19 patients per province who are in ICU and/or high care
10. The total number of COVID-19 patients per province who were transferred from ICU and/or high care
11. The total number of COVID-19 patients per province that did not survive ICU and/or high care.
12. An estimation of the reproduction number (R)

It is also very important for the public to understand what criteria are used for a death to be reported as a COVID-19-related death. We therefore request you to provide us with the protocol for the reporting of COVID-19-related death.

The public must also understand how contact tracing is approached and executed. We therefore request you to provide us with the protocol or directions for contact tracing, preferably per province if the protocols or directions are unique to each province.

We are citizens, not subjects. The information gathered by the Department of Health is gathered on behalf of the citizenry and should therefore be provided to the citizenry in a transparent way. The information is not the Department's to withhold. Without information on deaths and cases per age group, it is impossible to calculate the case fatality rate, for example. Without information about the testing performed per province, it is impossible for citizens to assess the situation in a province properly.

We are cognisant of the gravity of the COVID-19 situation in our country. We are urging our members and structures to take responsibility for their communities and adopt behaviours that are required to combat COVID-19. However, we are concerned that a lack of basic information undermines efforts to combat the virus.

Therefore, we implore you to provide the information requested as soon as possible.

Kind regards

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