

# SA Health Ministry hands over confidential Covid-19 vaccine contracts

 By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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In response to legal action initiated by the Health Justice Initiative (HJI), the South African National Department of Health has provided the HJI's legal team with an initial set of Covid-19 vaccine procurement agreements.



Source: [Pixabay](#)

This follows a landmark ruling, in which the North Gauteng High Court ordered the disclosure of these ostensibly 'confidential' Covid-19 vaccine contracts and other documents, and placed a 10-day deadline on the National Department of Health to release them to the public.

Furthermore, the SA Health Department has committed to sharing the remaining set of documents, which they were instructed to disclose, in accordance with this agreement, no later than 29 September, 2023.

This move not only sets a precedent within Africa but also highlights South Africa's potential to become the first African nation to share crucial information that has largely remained inaccessible to most countries, as revealed by a report from Transparency International.



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The HJI welcomed the Health Ministry's decision to not appeal the Judgment.

"This is a massive victory for transparency and accountability. The contracts concern substantial public funds, and the contracting process has been marred by allegations that the government procured vaccines at differential, comparatively inflated prices, and that the agreements may contain onerous and inequitable terms including broad indemnification clauses, export restrictions and non-refundability clauses," the HJI [said](#) in a media statement.

Fatima Hassan, director of HJI added, “We are encouraged that the Minister and the Department of Health will not be appealing this ground-breaking judgment and that it has undertaken to release all meeting minutes, agreements and contracts relating to its procurement of Covid-19 vaccines.

“This is an important day for our democracy and for opening up the process of health procurement. It sends a strong signal to powerful pharmaceutical companies and others that in South Africa, transparency cannot be bartered and is not up for sale - there really is no room for this much secrecy in the health or any other sector.”

## Assessing compliance

The HJI and a collaborative civil society group are slated to scrutinise the contracts that have been recently provided to them in the days ahead.

Hassan conveyed that the analysis of part 1, alongside all the pertinent documents (contracts) furnished to the HJI, will be presented during a joint Zoom press conference scheduled for Tuesday, September 5, 2023, at 14:00 SAST.

Furthermore, she mentioned that this analysis will be made accessible [here](#) on the HJI website at the conclusion of the press briefing.

Part 2 will be released in a similar way and will be available in early October 2023.

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Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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