

No DNA evidence for past year – SAPS

The criminal justice system is being brought to its knees because the country's two main criminal forensic science laboratories have been unable to process DNA and other evidence for almost a year. A [Daily Dispatch](#) report says thousands of blood, semen and other DNA samples are piling up at the country's two SAPS criminal forensic laboratories in Cape Town and Pretoria due to a funding and supply chain crisis – which has left them without essential chemicals, consumables or contracts in place to service and calibrate sensitive equipment. SAPS Lieutenant-Colonel Sharlene Otto told Eastern Cape High Court (Makhanda) Acting Judge Miki Mfenyana that **some 28 000 samples have piled up over an 11-month period at the Cape Town laboratory alone**. Otto was summonsed to give evidence about the year-long delay of DNA evidence analysis in two separate cases of child rape set down to be heard in the same court. Otto said she did not have first-hand knowledge of the financial and contractual issues leading to the crisis the laboratories faced, and could only speak to what she had been told and the direct effect on the labs which did such essential work to keep the criminal justice system going. The country's top criminal laboratory technicians have had to sit on their hands for almost a year as sealed samples pour into their offices for urgent testing. Otto said the samples were vacuum-sealed, secure and carefully catalogued so there was at least no danger of them disappearing, getting mixed up or being contaminated.