

Bookkeeper arrested for R11m Covid Ters fraud

The Department of Employment and Labour has welcomed the arrest of a bookkeeper accused of swindling the Unemployment Insurance Fund Covid-19 Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (Ters) of R11.1 million.



Source: eevl – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The department in a statement said the 39-year-old suspect was scheduled to appear in the Palm Ridge Magistrate's Court on 31 August 2021.

The bookkeeper allegedly submitted Covid-19 Ters claims on behalf of four clients but “conveniently forgot to make the clients aware” of the claims, said the department.

“Subsequently, an amount of R11.1 million was paid into the suspect's business accounts.

“The intended clients realised something was not fine after they were harangued by their employees for not paying them Ters monies they had claimed and at this point, they reported the matter to the police,” the statement reads.

Following joint investigations between the UIF and the police, the suspect was traced and arrested in Durban on

Wednesday. A luxury Audi Q2, suspected to be part of the proceeds of crime, was seized.

Acting UIF Commissioner, Advocate Mzie Yawa, has welcomed the swift arrest and commended law enforcement authorities for bringing the suspect to justice with speed.

"I hope the latest arrest sends a strong and clear message to other would-be fraudsters that the long arm of the law will catch up with you. Those who have helped themselves to the funds earmarked for workers during lockdown should always remember: The long arm of the law is creeping towards them and they will not have peace.

"Working together with law enforcement agencies, we will continue investigating every lead pointing us to suspected fraudulent activities, and we thank the public for being vigilant about the abuse of Covid-19 Ters funds.

"We cannot tolerate the siphoning off of workers' benefits by unscrupulous individuals. All fraudsters are on notice and we hope more of these suspects will be arrested and sent straight to jail," said Yawa.

The latest arrest comes against the backdrop of at least 17 suspects who have been apprehended and have appeared in various courts around the country for allegedly fleecing the UIF's Covid-19 Ters Scheme.

The fund has also recovered around R827 million through the "follow the money" project and anticipates that more will be recovered as the project is extended a further 12 months.

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