

City Ordered to Talk to Gugulethu Hostel Families

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allafrica.com
15 September 2011

THE City of Cape Town wants the families living in Gugulethu's dilapidated Masonwabe Park hostels to be evacuated "immediately", but the Cape High Court has ordered the parties spend a month trying to find an amicable solution.

The city wants the hostel residents to move to Blikkiesdorp a much feared and hated Temporary Relocation Area (TRA) in Delft so that they can demolish the apartheid-era hostels and construct low-cost housing on the land.

The approximately 300 hostel residents have refused to budge, however, despite them admitting that the hostels are in a state of extreme disrepair, they do not want to move to Blikkiesdorp, which consists of row upon row of unpainted corrugated iron shacks.

Representing the City of Cape Town before Judge Ashley Binns-Ward yesterday, advocate Anton Katz said the living conditions at Masonwabe Park were inhuman and violated the residents' dignity.

Katz said moving the residents to Blikkiesdorp would allow the City to renovate the hostels and build low-cost houses.

One of the seven respondents, Ellen Leputing, 62, said the alternative accommodation offered by the city was a single room unit per family in an area that was far away from their places of work and schooling and was "dangerous".

Leputing acknowledged Masonwabe Park was decrepit and overflowing sewerage and standing pools of dirty water caused a health hazard, but Blikkiesdorp was not an option.

Residents, 50 of whom crammed into the court to hear proceedings, have said they are scared that if they move to Blikkiesdorp they'll never get out of there as the city has made no promise that they would be certain to receive any of the proposed low-cost houses.

Judge Binns-Ward welcomed a proposal that an inspection of Blikkiesdorp and Masonwabe Park be held so the court could obtain a clear picture of conditions there and ordered the city and residents to engage in "meaningful discussions" on how best to settle the matter.

The postponement was ordered before the residents submitted that an inspection loco be held in Blikkiesdorp and in Masonwabe Park hostels so the court could have a clear understanding of the conditions in both locations.

The residents also claim that people living on the hostels are far more than the 41 that the City intends providing alternative accommodation to.

He would then hear further arguments on the matter on October 17 and 18

"I am not directing any criticism to the City but observations are that there has not been sufficient engagement between the City and the residents," said Binns-Ward.

"It seems to me the *prima facie* observations are that the (agreement to) allocate TRA's (temporary relocation area) was done in the dark.

"I want to give you (relevant parties) an opportunity to discuss these matters amongst yourselves. Once the parties start talking to another some aspects might be resolved."