

Cape Town warns on land invasions

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Cape Town - Land invasions in Mitchell's Plain could delay the provision of formal housing in the area, Cape Town authorities warned on Monday.

"Portions of land in the Kapteinsklip and Swartklip areas, which were invaded over the weekend, are earmarked for formal housing," the city said in a statement.

The statement follows two days of clashes between police and about 150 so-called backyard dwellers, who had built shacks on the land, and reacted violently to attempts to remove the structures.

According to media reports, 18 people, including six police officers, have been injured in the violence. Police reacted by firing rubber bullets and using a water cannon after being pelted with stones.

The city said while it was sympathetic to the fact that some people had been waiting a long time for housing, and were impatient, it could not allow them to illegally occupy vacant land, or build structures.

"The city has plans for formal houses in the Kapteinsklip area. Unfortunately this will take time, as roads, water, electricity and sanitation have to be put in first.

"People will be allocated housing according to the official housing waiting list. This will ensure that people cannot jump the queue. Invading land will not result in being given preference over someone else on the waiting list."

It further warned that if people continued to attempt to occupy the land and erect illegal structures, the city would consider approaching the High Court for an eviction order and to break the structures down.

"It will also ask the court to grant an interdict to stop any further structures and unlawful occupation. This is being done to safeguard land, ensure proper planning and provision of services, as well as to ensure fairness to all who have waited for houses for a long time."

According to the statement, the SA Police Service and city law enforcement agencies were monitoring and assessing the situation on Monday, after the weekend clashes.

"The SAPS is in command, with city staff playing a supporting role," it said.