

'Double standards' in Hout Bay

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Duncan Alfreds, News24

Cape Town - Police officials, protesters and journalists were injured as police stormed the community of Hangberg in Hout Bay on Tuesday.

Police armed with shields and rifles fired rubber bullets in order to quell a protest over the dismantling of illegal structures built on the slopes on the Hout Bay Sentinel. The City of Cape Town regards the dwellings as dangerous because they are built on a firebreak, but residents have vowed to fight any evictions.

"On Wednesday, I had a meeting with (Western Cape Premier) Helen Zille and she was adamant that people must break down the so-called illegal structures," community leader Greg Louw told News24 as the area burned.

Some residents who were hit by rubber bullets were rushed to hospital and protesters told News24 that some were in a serious condition. At least one policeman was injured by stones.

"That lady was on her way to work and the police just started shooting at anyone. She was lying behind a bush and they shot her," said a protester who declined to be identified.

Double standards

Ikram Halim was hit in the face.

"I came in here and his face was full of blood. They just told me he was shot," said his mother-in-law, who identified herself as Mrs Warner.

"I'm very worried about my daddy," said his daughter, one of three children.

The City of Cape Town moved in on Tuesday morning to remove the illegal dwellings, saying they were a fire risk ahead of the summer fire season.

But at least one Hout Bay resident told News24 that there seemed to be double standards when it came to enforcing the law around the illegal structures.

"The woman who looks after my kids lives in this township and I don't think any member of the Hout Bay community has a problem with the Hangberg settlement.

"Many of the people who live here were born here and the City talks about 70-odd illegal structures. But there are over 600 illegal structures in Imizamo Yethu. I've never seen this kind of mass police action in that township," said the resident who declined to be identified.

Action

Hangberg residents displayed anger at the plans to break down the illegal structures.

"This community wants to partner with the government. We don't want warning and threat, but she (Zille) doesn't have a plan for this community," community leader Greg Louw said.

"This community got the shortest end of this democracy," shouted one resident.

Other residents echoed the sentiment with screams such as "Os gat the Mariner's Warf af brand" (We will burn down Mariner's Warf) and "Why don't you build hotels in Blikkiesdorp?" in reference to the area to which residents fear they will be moved.

City spokesperson Kylie Hatton said that the City wanted to limit the number of informal structures and that action would soon be taken against the illegal Imizamo Yethu structures.

"A line needs to be drawn and the City needs to act where the law has been broken," Hatton told News24.