

Church enters Kennedy Road fray

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AS PROVINCIAL government authorities stepped in to find a lasting solution to the violence that has engulfed the Kennedy Road informal settlement in Durban, church leaders yesterday called on the national government to urgently establish a commission of enquiry.

Two people died, while many others were injured during the unrest. Thousands have since fled the area after a mob, armed with an assortment of weapons, went on the rampage assaulting people and destroying homes.

The chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches, Bishop Barry Wood, has since called on the local and provincial governments to provide immediate relief to the displaced, especially women and children.

The settlement, home to more than 7000 people, has been fraught with tensions arising from, among other things, poor service delivery.

Wood also came out in support of social movement Abahlali baseMjondolo whose leaders, including chairperson S'bu Zikode, were attacked and their homes destroyed.

"The resultant deaths, detentions, beatings and displacement of an estimated 2000 residents are deeply saddening," he said.

Wood's support for Abahlali comes amid increased pressure for the movement to be engaged in all peace efforts by local government leaders. MEC for transport, community safety and liaison Willie Mchunu yesterday made an impassioned plea for Zikode to engage in all future talks.

"I am informed that Zikode is part of the local leadership structures or at the very least has some interest in Kennedy Road.

"I am disappointed that he could not make it to the Kennedy Road Stakeholders' Symposium."

Zikode, in response, said he was not invited to the recent meetings, and that some members of his movement have received death threats.