

Council flats grab: vets dig in

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OVER 200 former Mkhonto we Sizwe (MK) members who forced their way into unoccupied rental flats in the Aloe Ridge housing project in Westgate have vowed to continue fighting for housing despite threats of an urgent interdict to evict them.

The MK veterans, alongside other former army military wings, including the Pan Africanist Congress's Azania People's Liberation Army (Alpa) and Azapo's Azanian National Liberation Army (Azanla), took over 250 units at the complex after overpowering staff and seizing keys on Monday.

Yesterday, they were adamant that they would only vacate the complex once the Human Settlements Department has provided them with proper housing as promised.

Azapo's Azanian National Liberation Army (Azanla) regional chairperson Thabo Tlale said they were promised that the construction of the houses would begin last October.

"Last year there were 30 houses that were supposed to be built for military veterans in Glenwood.

"The preparations started a long time ago. The first house was supposed to be opened on December 15 by the minister. That didn't happen. Till today, not even a single house has been built.

"We have agreed many times and put targets but nothing comes to fruition. They promised another 250 houses in Copesville. When are we going to start building those houses when this small project hasn't been completed," said Tlale.

He claimed that only five houses have been built in the province with the R100 million fund injected into the project. “Only five houses have been built. Two in Umbumbulu, two in kwaMakhutha and one in Chesterville. There is no house in Pietermaritzburg. They keep giving us excuses and we have grown impatient,” added Tlale.

Human Settlements Department provincial spokesperson Mbulelo Baloi said the department was still trying to establish whether or not the military veterans were legitimate.

“There is an ongoing project where 30 houses are being built but the houses are allocated according to the list that was supplied by the Department of Military Veterans. We don’t just take anyone because we receive a subsidy from that department for the housing purposes.”

Although Baloyi acknowledged that there have been interruptions in the project, he said the veterans were partly to blame for delays.

“Some of the veterans said they wanted to build the houses themselves but we found that their construction companies did not meet the necessary credentials. They were adamant that they will not let another implementing agent build the houses,” said Baloyi.

One of the ring leaders of the group, Babo Mndaweni, said they were waiting for Human Settlements to come on board.

“We are not stealing the flats, we are just occupying them until we get houses. We are not going to wait for another 24 years. If they want us out, we must be allocated shelter.”

Mbambo said on Monday he spoke to officials from the Human Settlements Department who promised to intervene but by late yesterday no one had reverted back to him with a solution.

MKMVA regional convener Menzi Mkhize declined to comment.

Today, an application for an urgent interdict is expected to be brought to the Pietermaritzburg high court by Capital City Housing, which built the units in conjunction with the Human Settlements Department.

Pietermaritzburg police spokesperson Sergeant Mthokozisi Ngobese said yesterday that police can only make arrests once an interdict has been issued.