

# Guards, land invaders clash

Thami Magubane

**D**URBAN communities and security firms clashed with land invaders on at least two pieces of land at the weekend.

In Chatsworth yesterday, tensions were high as invaders from uMlazi continued to clear land in the Silverglen Nature Reserve to construct new homes.

And in Sherwood, residents protested after land invaders began clearing land near Piedmont Road.

The invaders in Silverglen accused security guards of violent behaviour following another round of clashes between the two groups over the weekend.

Guards attached to the eThekweni anti-land invasion unit were trying to stop the community which is intent on marking plots in the reserve.

Although community members mainly from the C and H sections of uMlazi, started marking plots last month, they are yet to put up any physical structures.

"We must state that the police have treated us in a decent manner. It is the security guards employed by the municipality that are treating us terribly."

"This past weekend they shot at us with rubber bullets, and it was not the first time they did that."

"The community got angry and started burning tyres and barricading the road running through the



Men cut down young trees in the Silverglen Forest to erect shacks in the nature reserve. PICTURE: GCINA NDWALANE/AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA)

reserve," said Sbahle Danisa, one of the community leaders.

"We cannot continue to live like this. We understand that the municipality is still investigating who is the owner of the land before it can make any pronouncement," she said.

Sherwood ward councillor Warren Burne said land invasions were an ongoing problem in his ward.

He said the situation had calmed yesterday after the municipality deployed security personnel.

"There was a lot of clearing of the land this past weekend. A piece of land close to Piedmont Road came under attack with land invaders clearing the area."

"There were always small groups of people in informal houses living nearby."

But with more people clearing the land there, the residents in the formal housing are concerned that an informal settlement will emerge in front of their homes."

Human settlements MEC Ravi

Pillay said while they recognise the hunger for land, the provincial government would not tolerate any situation likely to create chaos.

"The sale of land is a big problem we face. There are people who have been arrested for selling land."

"A recent study through the University of KwaZulu-Natal found that about 20% of people living in the shacks pay rent, while about 40% are paying for the site the shack is on... and that is a problem."

He said they want all law-enforcement agencies to clamp down on land invasions.

Senior Superintendent Parboo Sewpersad of eThekweni metro police said security guards had the responsibility to prevent land invasions.

"We must commend them for doing their jobs, and we will continue to prevent land invasions until we get an instruction from the municipality that says otherwise."

Sewpersad said at the weekend they also had to contend with land invasions in Sherwood, but that the security guards had dispersed the land invaders.

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