

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROBE: Residents sell state-owned houses for up to R120 000

Law of the jungle in Oribi village

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RESIDENTS of Oribi Village who dare to go away for a weekend risk having their homes occupied by strangers desperate for accommodation.

Lawlessness has gripped the village for low-income earners, and the government, which owns the site, has vowed to clean up the mess within two months. There are 365 households in the village.

Some, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a few unscrupulous individuals owned more than one unit and either sold or rented them out illegally. A resident, who identified himself only as Tim, said the law of the jungle applied in Oribi.

"If you go away, the chances are you will come back and find new occupants in your house," he said.



Oribi Village.

PHOTO: JONATHAN BURTON

"It's the survival of the fittest out here. We're all desperate for houses and it's sad that there are bullies among us."

Though they have no title deeds for the units, residents are allegedly selling houses for up to R120 000.

Nobuhle Mngomezulu claims she bought a one-bedroom unit from a 70-year-old woman. Neighbours have since accused her of evicting the woman from her house.

But she revealed a unit with one bedroom cost anything from R45 000 to R55 000, while a two- or three-bedroom house with a parking area cost R80 000 to R120 000.

Another resident, Rebekka Crowe, confirmed they had no title deeds. Her family of 11 stays in a two-bedroom unit.

"This village was meant for poor people who don't have an income or who don't qualify for housing bonds or RDP houses. Sometimes people watch when there's no one at home and they break in and occupy it. There's no order in this place."

"I don't qualify for a bond or RDP house, so I chose to live here, although in squalid conditions."

To "buy" her house, Mngomezulu said she took a personal loan from the bank. She declined to say what it cost her.

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In October last year, the Human Settlements Department said it was investigating the illegal occupation and sale of the government-owned houses.

Last week, spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi said MEC Ravi Pillay was aware of the Oribi situation and had visited the area in December.

"The MEC said this matter will be one of his priorities before the end of this financial year, which ends in March," Baloyi said they first needed to "regularise tenants" to identify the legitimate occupants.

He confirmed that the sale or renting of the homes was illegal as they belonged to the state.

"The occupants only pay for their electricity. Once the matter is dealt with, those who paid to buy them will lose out," said Baloyi.

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