

# THE ANTI-BLACKNESS OF COVID EVICTIONS

## INTRO

ON TUESDAY, JULY 18, PEOPLE WITHOUT HOMES OCCUPIED LAND IN ZWELITSHA, KHAYELITSHA.

THREE DAYS LATER, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS FROM THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN ARRIVED TO DEMOLISH AND REMOVE THE STRUCTURES RESIDENTS HAD SET UP.

ACTIVIST AND THEATRE DIRECTOR, MANDISI SINDO, WAS ARRESTED BY THE POLICE. HE SAYS HE WAS PROTECTING A PREGNANT WOMAN. SHE WAS TRYING TO GET HER ID DOCUMENT THAT A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER HAD CONFISCATED ALONG WITH HER SHACK MATERIALS BACK.

## AWONKE GIYO

Yesterday we were there at the back, building our houses. We were already done with building ours, and everything was alright. law enforcement arrived and started demolishing [the houses]. We went there when they were in the middle of demolishing. We asked them to stop and to let us do it ourselves. And then we did [dismantle the structures ourselves]. As they were standing there about to leave with our building materials, The residents became angry and started to burn the road.

**This was not an eviction, but removal of partially built structures. The City cannot allow land and projects to be invaded. The large number of orchestrated land invasions in Cape Town should be a great cause of alarm as it has enormous impacts on local governments and local communities.**  
*Councillor Malusi Booi, mayoral committee member for human settlements, City of Cape Town, 19 August 2020*

## MANDISI SINDO

This thing actually, is happening all over in Cape Town right now. Where people are taking the land, where people are building houses, because these people who are

building these houses are living in shacks.  
You would find about 8-10 people living  
in a one roomed shack.  
So, there you can see even the limitation  
of COVID-19, or the following of the regulations.  
It's broken already.  
So, if one person is getting the COVID-19 there,  
It is largely that lot of people  
are going to get COVID-19 in that house.

### **NQOBILE ZWABU**

People were running away.  
I ran as well.  
While we were running  
they shot me here behind the ear,  
with a rubber bullet.  
I got into another  
shack with another man.  
I sat down and then I heard one  
of my friends Sikho crying,  
"I'm just a child... I'm just as child."  
"Please, please no!"  
They didn't let him go.  
I came out of the shack.  
When I got out, they  
were dragging him by his T-shirt.  
Others were beating him.

**The City's teams only discharge rubber bullets if provoked to primarily disperse crowds and when they come under threat from harm or law abiding residents are threatened. No live ammunition is used by City authorities.**

*Councillor Malusi Booji, mayoral committee member for human settlements, City of Cape Town, 19 August 2020*

### **NOMBUYISELO MGUZULWA**

It was going to be the first time  
that I had my own place.  
I had the material for it,  
but they took it all yesterday.  
So now I don't have anything.  
I am back to square one.

### **MANDISI SINDO**

Metro Police and law enforcement, they came through.  
You understand? And coming through

they did not talk to the people.  
They did what they're good at -  
violating peoples' rights.  
So, it was heart-breaking  
for me to be in that situation.  
Especially when they  
started to attack a pregnant woman  
who was looking for her ID.  
She could see the bag hanging  
from the material that they were carrying to the truck.  
She said, "I just want my ID.  
When I give birth, I will need that ID."  
And that guy kept on pushing her.  
That irritated me as a  
black man in South Africa.  
I started to fight for her until I got arrested.

### **AXOLILE NOTYWALA**

What we've seen, and what we've discussed,  
what we've witnessed across Cape Town,  
is that these individual cases of abuse of power, of the  
victimisation of people are not just individual cases.  
They are systemic.  
what we are saying is that in  
order for us to deal with all these things,  
the whole of the law enforcement of  
the City of Cape Town must be abolished,  
because it is an anti-poor  
and anti-black structure,  
That is used to victimise poor and  
black people across the City of Cape Town.

**The City specifically notes this as an unsubstantiated racial slur against our dedicated law enforcement staff of all races. In the past two years, there have been 13 dismissals of law enforcement officers following charges of misconduct, which attests to the City's accountability with regard to staff who contravene the code of conduct.**

***Alderman JP Smith, mayoral committee member for safety and security, City of Cape Town, 19 August 2020***

### **NKOSIKHONA SWARTBOOI**

We are here today now.  
We moved from the court to come  
to offices of the law enforcement.

To say that we are speaking  
against the brutality  
that we are seeing them imposing on  
black people particularly women and children.  
We are now 26 years into  
our democracy as South Africa.  
what we are seeing now  
currently in Khayelitsha,  
is that people are being  
evicted into homelessness.  
And there's the violence  
that's imposed by law enforcement,  
towards poor people whose only crime  
is looking for a place to call a home.

### **MANDISI SINDO**

I think the law enforcement needs to  
be demolished. It needs to be destroyed,  
because their mindset is F'd up.  
Sorry for saying that,  
because what it does to the people.  
How many people have been hit?  
How many people have  
been shot during the lockdown?  
And we are saying we are free.  
How are we free?  
Do you understand? People... the whole community...  
and then they were threatened  
with the soldiers being called.  
We are not a gig for soldiers to come  
and hit us in the townships.  
The soldiers last hit people  
during the apartheid era,  
and now they find it... they think it's a  
gig to come and hit people in townships.

**These comments are a disservice to the men and women who put their  
lives on the line for the public. Since 11 July, there have been 109 land  
invasions and related unrest, with 46 injuries to staff and 32 government  
and private vehicles damaged.**

***Alderman JP Smith, mayoral committee member for safety and security, City of  
Cape Town, 19 August 2020***

### **NOMBUYISELO MGUZULWA**

After my materials were gone, I said  
it's better I go and sleep at the police station,

because I am left with nothing and I had already moved out from where I was previously staying.

### **XOLISA NDWEBI**

I didn't expect that I would get shot at, while we were trying to stop the law enforcement from vandalising people's homes, and to take their material. Instead of getting a chance to speak with them, we got shot.

### **AXOLILE NOTYWALA**

So, the City has failed in their duty to engage communities. And to give communities information. And also, if he says they have plans that we are hearing about now. What about the rest of the informal settlements that have existed, for 15 years, for 20 years, for 30 years? Where are those plans? Where have those plans been? Because, these occupations are not the only occupations in Cape Town. All informal settlements in Cape Town started as occupations. Some of them started 30 years ago, in 1990 and in 1989, they had already existed. They still exist today. They don't have basic services. They don't have dignified water, or sanitation and clean water. Those things are not there. These are just excuses for them to continue to evict people, and to run away from their duties, which they have failed in providing people with housing and dignified basic services.

**The City of Cape Town did not respond to Eh!woza and Bhekisisa's question about whether people evicted by the City were provided with alternative housing options.**

**For the City of Cape Town's full responses to our questions, visit [bhkisisa.org](http://bhkisisa.org) or [ehwoza.com](http://ehwoza.com).**