

Protests over SAPS station upgrade

Calls for R100m boost to be spent on other stations

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THE R100 million "super" police station planned for Muizenberg has received vehement opposition from the Social Justice Coalition (SJC), with activists and supporters of the organisation taking their frustrations to the police's doorstep in protest.

A group of SJC members yesterday staged peaceful demonstrations outside the provincial headquarters of the SA Police Service (SAPS) in Green Point, against the imminent upgrade and extension of the police station, situated on top of a steep hill against the Muizenberg mountain range.

The Cape Argus broke the story which had outraged several poorer communities in Cape Town.

"How can one police station cost R100m? Are they trying to build another Nkandla with a fire pool at that police station?" the SJC's Chumile Sali asked.

"We are here to oppose the plans to spend a R100m on a police station for the white and safer community of Muizenberg while police know that there are communities that are in need of police resources, communities like Vrygrond, Nyanga, Masi-phumelele and Makhaza and many others," Sali said.

"Police must stop prioritising white and rich communities, because we know people who live in those areas have access to private security."

Muizenberg councillor Aimee Kuhl said while she supported the upgrade to the Muizenberg police station, she had proposed that it not be extended. Kuhl said initial plans which were presented five years ago only entailed the upgrading of the old building, which was built in the 1900s.

"Where the Muizenberg police station is now is in a white privileged area... the community that needs services, that needs

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schools and clinics and needs a police station is Vrygrond," Kuhl said.

Senior SJC researcher Dalli Weyers said there were "many other police stations that have a heavier burden of crime are also in dire need of upgrading".

"Nyanga, for instance, its FCS unit, which is the Family Violence Child Protection and Sexual offences unit, is not located in Nyanga. It is at the Mitchells Plain police station, which is 10km away," Weyers said.

"Similarly, the detectives at Nyanga police station are not stationed there, they rent offices 9km away. Nyanga is South Africa's murder capital, so surely then resources should be put towards improving that police station."

According to Statistics SA, there were 27 murders reported in Muizenberg last year, while 279 people were killed in Nyanga and another 161 in Khayelitsha during the same period.

Sali said: "Police need to comply with its own policies and theoretical human resource requirements system which states where resources are being allocated. They need to look at crime rates, population, size of the area and other factors, and they are not doing that."

Provincial police spokesperson Novela Potelwa responded: "Public Works is responsible for the upgrade of Muizenberg police station in terms of the planned repair and maintenance of buildings project.

"It is worth placing on record that we strive towards the equitable distribution of police resources guided by crime trends and patterns, as well as spatial growth and development," Potelwa added. - *siyabonga.sesant@inl.co.za*