

Land fight moves to court

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THE violent demonstrations in Bonela by shack dwellers had fizzled out at the weekend as informal residents prepared to take their fight to the Durban High Court on Friday.

A member of the Bonela CPF, who declined to be named for fear of victimisation, said that since last Friday there had been a noticeable drop in intimidation by mobs of land invaders.

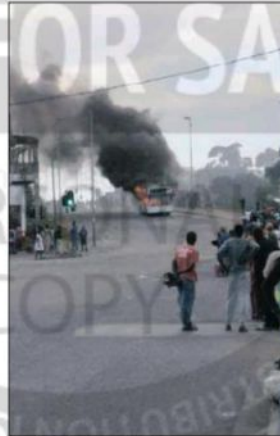
He believes the informal dwellers were preparing for battle in court following a recent interdict allowing 241 families to rebuild shacks unlawfully demolished by the city's Land Invasion Unit.

Come this Friday, the families, represented by shack dwellers movement Abahlali BaseMjondolo, will go head-to-head with Mayor Zandile Gumede and municipal manager Sipho Nzuza, who are expected to show the court why a permanent order should not be granted in favour of the informal residents.

"The Land Invasion Unit came through on Sunday to keep a record of residents on the court order and to ensure they are building no more than instructed. But no extreme cases of violence have been seen compared to the past two weeks," said the CPF member.

The man, who resides in the area, said residents still lived in fear.

"Abahlali is a powerful organisation and should make a formal announcement to make



A municipal bus was torched last Thursday in the wake of unrest in Bonela.

PICTURES: SUPPLIED

this stop. They need to come to the table and speak to the people," he said.

"From the ground, whether there are opportunists or not, they (squatters) are building these shacks regardless of court orders. They (Abahlali) need to come to the area and tell them they are not supposed to be here."

He said he failed to understand the need for violence. "A father was recently assaulted and his car totalled. I mean, he is harmless and has a family. Why resort to such measures?"

Some residents claimed the unrest had turned racial after homeowners were allegedly told to "go back to India".

Dimple Harrikisson, 27, whose home was petrol bombed last weekend, said: "While marching, they swore at us and told us to go back to our country, which is not fair because this has now turned into a racial fight. Something which was never expected."

A message doing the rounds on WhatsApp crime groups also alleged that faeces were thrown on "Indian owned" homes.

However, key role-players could not confirm this.

Last Thursday, a municipal bus was set alight on Bellair Road allegedly in retaliation for informal homes being destroyed by the Land Invasion Unit. This was the second bus destroyed in the past two weeks.

Abahlali's S'bu Zikode said the government had no regard for the poor. "It treats our legitimate and urgent aspirations for justice as criminal and rules us with violence," he said. He planned to continue to protect those in the interim order and would push for justice of the poor and oppressed.

Meanwhile, KZN Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Ravi Pillay and eThekweni Municipality's Human Settlements and Infrastructure Committee chairperson, Councillor Mondli Mthembu, visited Mariannridge where land invasion is also rampant.

Pillay assured residents the construction of a new housing development would take place by September 14. "I can assure you that work has been done."