

# New crowd at Reeston hearing

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A GROUP of more than 20 Buffalo City Metro ward 13 residents yesterday protested outside the East London Magistrate's Court, demanding that the the "Reeston Eight" – who stand accused of murder, arson and malicious damage to property – face the full might of the law.

They are accused of torching two RDP houses and three vehicles belonging to their 54-year-old BCM ANC ward 13 councillor, Nokulunga Matiwane, last August.

The accused, aged between 24 and 45, are Vuyokazi Maphukatha, Nomfuneko Majingane, Nosicelo Wewe, Nomvuyo Qeve, Zwelixolile Nkohla, Phelisa Vakele, Phelisa Shotane and Siziwe Daniso.

Matiwane's 23-year-old daughter, Nonkululeko Matiwane, who was disabled, was trapped in one of the houses and died.

Yesterday, the group of seven women and one man, who are all out on bail, made a brief appearance and their case was postponed to April 18.

The torching of Matiwane's properties followed allegations that her husband, Mthuthuzeli, had killed Nomboniso Twana, 54, and Nombulelo Mpitimpiti, 50, for defaulting on monthly kickbacks they paid to the councillor for giving them extended public works programme jobs.

Previously, a group of protesters sympathetic to the accused, who had signed a long petition calling for their release when they applied for bail last September, were seen in court during their appearances.

However, a group of those supporting Matiwane protested outside court yesterday, calling for lengthy jail terms for the Reeston Eight.

One of Matiwane's supporters, Vuyolwethu Tenana, who said he was an ANC member from the ward, said those who stand accused of allegedly torching Matiwane's properties, resulting in her child's death, "should face the full might of the law and be sentenced for their evil deed".

Fellow protester Vuyokazi Hlanganiso said their action yesterday was prompted "by the fact that an innocent child died during their stupid action fuelled by hooliganism and political differences".

"We are here calling for court to make sure that all those who did this are sentenced to lengthy terms."

The accused were released on R500 bail each last September.

Their alleged action is said to have been prompted by the arrest of Matiwane's husband, Mthuthuzeli, for the alleged murder of the two Reeston women, who were shot dead at the Buffalo Pass.

Mthuthuzeli was arrested after one of the women is said to have managed to identify him before she succumbed to her injuries.

He was arrested together with his wife, who is out on R500 bail on charges of conspiracy to murder.

Mthuthuzeli is still in custody as he was denied bail for the two counts of murder. — *asandan@dispatch.co.za*