

GroundUp

By [Thembela Ntongana](#)

19 March 2018

One of the occupants of the Helen Bowden Nurses Home near Somerset hospital died after allegedly being stabbed by a security guard on Sunday night.

The man was one of the leaders of a group of people who occupied the building as part of the Reclaim the City campaign in March 2017.

Western Cape SAPS spokesperson Sergeant Noloyiso Rwexana confirmed that a man was fatally stabbed. His name has not yet been released. None of the occupants we spoke to appeared to know what led to the stabbing. One leader told GroundUp that they were not in position to speak to media at present, and that they were all still at the mortuary.

“Police attended to a complaint at the address and upon their arrival they found a 50-year-old man with a stab wound to his body,” said Rwexana. She said a 41-year-old suspect was arrested and appeared in the Cape Town Magistrates’ court on Monday.

Reclaim the City and its supporters, many of whom are domestic workers working in the area, moved into abandoned rooms in Helen Bowden Nurses Home as part of a campaign for affordable housing in and near the city centre for low-income families.

In the beginning about a half-a-dozen people had moved into the building. Currently, according to residents, there are many more people living there, but GroundUp does not have an approximate estimate at this stage.

A day shift security guard said that the incident happened on Sunday night and only security guards that worked night shift would know what happened.

Masiqhambe Security Services (MSS) is the security company operating at the site. GroundUp was unable to find a contact number for the company at the time of publication.

On 19 July 2017 the occupants were [allegedly attacked](#) by armed men. Reclaim the City (RTC) claimed the attack was “politically motivated” and blamed security guards. The occupiers lodged a complaint with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and were promised that the matter would receive urgent attention.

When GroundUp visited the building on Monday morning it was quiet. Many people had gone to work. Some people were in their rooms and a few were walking in and out of the building. Even though the hallways were dark with no electricity and some toilets were blocked, the building was clean.

The Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works [addressed a letter \(7MB pdf file\)](#) on 9 March to the occupants, saying that since the occupation there have been “violent outbreaks of a physical and very serious nature”. The letter also stated that the government is currently paying close to R3 million per month and had paid R35 million in the past financial year on securing the building from “invasion, vandalism and theft”.

Reclaim the City will be holding a meeting on Monday night with the occupants.