

## **The South African (online)**

By Nic Andersen

### **R40m on the KZN presidential house and it's still “not habitable”**

The presidential house in KwaZulu-Natal has had tens of millions spent on it over the last few years. Apparently, it's still not even in a livable condition.

When you think of the long list of things that the Jacob Zuma presidency “wasted” money on, the presidential houses don't normally come to mind. Now, the JL Dube presidential house in Durban has been deemed mostly unfit for habitation.

This comes despite the fact that R40m was pumped into the property's renovations the year Jacob Zuma became president. IOL reports that there are now also plans to spend an additional R10m to revamp the house. If this plan goes through, R50m will have been spent on the presidential house since 2009.

The situation currently seems to be a lot more serious than just needing a décor upgrade. President Ramaphosa's spokesperson, Khusela Diko, has told the media that only 15% of the house is habitable. Some parts of the house have been secured as the structure is considered incredibly dangerous.

“The balance of the house has been cordoned off and no one can live in it,” Diko told IOL. The house was damaged by floods in 2016 and recently had general repairs carried out. The new R10m repair project is expected to take eight months to complete. It is believed that a Durban-based construction company was appointed as the contractor in January.

With numerous question regarding the time its taken to get the house repaired (or not repaired), Public Works spokesperson Thami Mchunu told The Star that investigations first had to be done. “When the storm damage occurred, the site was secured by boarding up the broken glass-panels and windows in the tower and skylight to avoid any further damage.”

“Only the upper-deck, the dome and the staircase were damaged. That is why certain parts of the residence remained usable, for instance to hold meetings,” he said. With the building being a heritage site, the Heritage Council in KZN has been approached for input and approval of the repairs. The residence was previously King's House and renamed by Zuma in 2012.