

Roaches and rats in police barracks

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Rats the size of cats, thousands of cockroaches, maggots, broken toilets and urine being thrown out of the windows are among the disgusting findings at the police residential quarters in Port Elizabeth.

Some of these squalid conditions at the Mount Road police station barracks were witnessed first-hand during a tour of the building on Tuesday.

The premises – situated behind the main police station building – house about 80 police officers who pay around R1,500 a month to live there.

A 3½-minute video emerged on social media on Monday showing piles of rubbish blocking the stairways, overflowing dustbins and food packets scattered across each floor.

On Tuesday, a team of cleaners was spotted working there, loading bags of refuse into a truck destined for a dump site.

On the seventh floor, piles of rubbish blocked the walkway and flies buzzed around the passages. The police are re-

sponsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the living quarters while the department of public works is responsible for building maintenance.

A strong stench of rubbish and urine permeated the building.

Almost all the bathrooms were broken, with rat faeces lining some of the corridors and the handles missing from several of the fire safety doors.

The higher you go up in the eight-storey building, the worse it gets, with used baby nappies, beer bottles, cigarette butts and what appears to be old food lining the fire escape walkways.

Maggots were visible among the cockroaches climbing the walls as the cleaners tried to collect the rubbish.

The first two floors of the building are occupied by the police's specialist Gang Investigation Unit while the remaining floors are the sleeping barracks.

Some of the tenants have moved into the 4m x 4m bedrooms with their families – including babies, some of whom could be heard crying.



LIVING IN FILTH: The stairway at the Mount Road police station barracks is littered with rubbish Picture: WERNER HILLS

The inhabitants share communal bathrooms, showers and ablution facilities.

Part of the issue is the shutting down of the dining hall due to a standoff between tenants and police management in 2016.

The management had wanted to raise the rentals by R800 a month to include meals, so that the tenants did not have to cook in their rooms.

But the tenants refused to pay the extra amount at the time, leading to the closure of the dining hall.

Several police officers, who did not want to be named, said the issues around the filthy living conditions escalated after the dining hall was shut.

Those who work in the building said it had been a problem since 2018, when the building experienced a massive

rat infestation. "Rats were climbing the drain pipes," one officer said.

"You could walk through the building and see huge rats running around.

"Eventually, poison was put down everywhere and they died. It is disgusting."

Another officer said that while working at their desks, they would suddenly see buckets of urine being thrown from the top floor windows into the inner well of the building.

"It is absolutely shocking.

"People have booked off sick from infections that we assume came from the building.

"It was so bad at one stage, one person touched his eye and got an infection.

"In some cases, people have urinated in the passages of the fire escape.

"When confronted, the standard response is that they live here and the toilets on that floor do not work."

Another officer said they had seen known criminals coming and going from the barracks. "They are stealing stuff. Where do you think the

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