

■ TRASHED



RUBBISH, strewn across roads in the Durban CBD during a municipal strike on Tuesday, lies on the sides of those roads yesterday.
| BONGANI MBATHA African News Agency (ANA)

City to prosecute strike vandals

SE-ANNE RALL

se-anne.koopman@inl.co.za

THE city has vowed to take action against striking workers who went on the rampage in the CBD on Tuesday.

Hundreds of disgruntled workers from eThekweni's water, sanitation and electricity departments protested against the upgrading of salaries for Umkhonto weSizwe military veterans from Grade 4 to 10.

Workers are demanding that their salaries be upgraded to match those of the MK vets.

The city said yesterday that it had decided to halt the upgrades for 55 MK vets.

They overturned bins and burnt debris along Anton Lembede (Smith) Street and outside the Durban City Hall and some roads were blocked by DSW trucks.

City manager Siphon Nzuza said they were going to invoke the "no work, no pay rule" for all employees who embarked on the illegal strike.

"We have also secured a court interdict to prevent further damage to the city's infrastructure and sabotage of essential services.

"Based on this court interdict, employees are urged to return to work immediately," he said.

Nzuza denounced the protests, adding that the behaviour of striking employees impacted negatively on rate-payers.

"The municipality will take action against employees who were responsible for causing chaos in the city in line with the existing policy prescription.

"It's unacceptable that while we were having discussions with union leaders, some employees were involved in acts of violence.

"The mere fact that some employees embarked on an illegal strike and used the employer's resources to try to force the municipality to accede to your demands, is completely unacceptable," he said.

Speaking on the vets, Nzuza said:

MAYOR'S LEADERSHIP ABILITIES QUESTIONED

QUESTIONS have been raised over whether mayor Zandile Gumede should remain in office following a number of violent protests across the city in recent weeks.

As residents prepare to vote on May 8, political parties have expressed concern over the land grabs and protests in eThekweni Municipality.

On Tuesday, hundreds of striking workers took to the streets of Durban's CBD, overturning bins and blocking roads with piles of dumped rubbish.

This comes after land grabs and several service-delivery protests by residents affected by the recent floods.

IFP councillor Mdu Nkosi said while there could be other officials at fault for a number of wrongs in the city, the buck stopped with the mayor.

DA leader in KwaZulu-Natal, Zwakele Mncwango, said concerns about Gumede's leadership abilities were raised in 2016.

"She is not about serving the people of the municipality. She has allowed the city to be ungovernable," he said.

Mncwango said while he understood the plight of residents, burning tyres and staging violent protests were not the way to be heard.

"This is to allow a thorough review of this process and to conduct an analysis of the impact of this decision to be concluded within 30 days," he said.

A task team, under the guidance of KwaZulu-Natal Premier Willies Mchunu and Public Works MEC Ravi Pillay, had been set up to review the process.

Nzuza said the review process would allow for all the affected employees to be consulted.

"It's only then that we can make an informed decision," he said.

The strikers were also condemned by Mchunu, who said there was no need for violence and the destruction of public assets for one to be heard.



Zandile Gumede

Mayoral spokesperson Mthunzi Gumede said contrary to the views of the opposition parties, the mayor had been busy attending to disaster management relief efforts since the heavy rains last week.

"She has also been busy with memorials and funeral arrangements for those who lost their lives," he said.

Regarding the strike, he said the mayor had been in talks with unions and stakeholders to find an amicable resolution to the challenges.

He added an official press statement would be released soon. | SE-ANNE RALL

Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union president Stanley Khoza said the protest was organised by the South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) and they were not privy to the meetings between the city and Samwu.

He added that they had met with Nzuza and supported the grievances raised by employees.

Samwu provincial secretary Jaycee Ncanana declined to comment.

Police spokesperson Captain Ngobile Gwala said a case of public violence had been opened in connection with the strike action. She said no arrests had been made as yet.