

ATHLONE

People's Post

TUESDAY 23 July 2019 | Tel: 021 910 6500 | Email: post@peoplespost.co.za | Website: www.peoplespost.co.za

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Cathkin informal settlement families are opposing an eviction case in court. PHOTO: NOMZAMO YUKU



HEIDEVELD

'There is no dignity'

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Life is an endless battle for residents of Cathkin informal settlement in Heideveld.

Despite surviving without services for more than a year now, they face eviction as they are illegally occupying land belonging to the provincial department of public works at the back of Cathkin High School.

Residents moved to the land in May last year after waiting for about 10 years for their houses from the City of Cape Town.

They never received services and say the City and ward councillor, Anthony Moses, are denying them services. Residents have since used buckets to relieve themselves. They get water from nearby flats, where the majority of people previously stayed with their families. They say the backyards of

their families were overcrowded and they needed to find alternatives housing. They have no proper electrical connections and their garbage is not collected. They have to find ways to make sure the area remains in bearable conditions for survival.

Recently there was a fire, which was allegedly caused by a faulty electrical connection and could not be doused due to the lack of water ("City blamed for fire damage," *People's Post*, 2 July).

The majority of residents are unemployed and they therefore share shacks sized between one and three-bedrooms. Families of two or more members including children live in these shacks.

According to residents, the reason for all these problems is a delay in housing delivery, and alleged corruption in the previous housing project.

They say some of the people living in the

settlement were beneficiaries of that project, but their houses were illegally sold or handed over to other people.

Blaming the councillor

They blame Moses for failing to listen and to help them.

They claim Moses is never available to help them and that he "bad-mouths" them to other authorities, making it difficult for them to get help. They are also accusing him of giving a unit he previously lived in, to his son instead of one of the needy residents after he bought his house in the area. Recently, they held a housing meeting where they excluded him and gave resolutions for a way forward in addressing their issues.

Resolutions included a few public meetings and more actions starting by directly engaging with mayor Dan Plato, which materialised on Wednesday 17 July when Plato

agreed to meet with their delegates.

Resolutions also included solidarity in exposing Moses for "who he is" and the role he plays in the community.

They hope to get answers about the processes, the quality and how things are handled regarding housing.

They claim there are still some housing irregularities.

A battle over this issue has reportedly been going on since the occupants moved in.

One of the residents who claim she was a beneficiary of that project but never got a house is Farinaaz Lakay.

"I still do not know how my name disappeared from the list. I was so excited. Life here is difficult. My husband and I share a bedroom with our 10-year-old daughter and have to look for suitable times to go empty the buckets. Where is dignity in that?"

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