

Land grab illegal

By Salomé Kotzé and Mohanoe Khiba

Klerksdorp Record, Stilfontein - While Matlosana Municipality is threatening legal action against people illegally occupying land in Stilfontein, they are continuing to mark out stands on the portion of land they have since dubbed "Mama Winnie Avenue".

Klerksdorp Record learnt that lists were circulated in Khuma by ward committee members where only certain people could add their names to settle on the land. Some people were getting preferential treatment and were added on the list while other people were skipped.

This caused conflict between residents and while the land grab started on vacant

land owned by the Department of Public Works, the area has now grown to include property owned by Matlosana Municipality as well as a piece of land owned by a Non-Profit Organisation.

People started occupying land on Sunday afternoon 21 July. On Monday morning people flocked to the area outside Stilfontein along the railway line at Umgeni Road to mark out their stands.

Nkosinathi Makume, a community leader and chairperson of Khuma CPF who spoke to *Klerksdorp Record*, said they are tired of being promised land and because they are told Khuma is full of dolomite they opted to settle on Stilfontein land. "We have invited councillors several times to our community meetings to address this

issue of Human Settlement that is affecting us, but with no luck, they don't attend. We have even sent an invite through the Speakers office, but still nothing."

While Stilfontein residents are growing more and more uneasy with the illegal land grabbing on their doorstep, Fanie du Toit, deputy leader of the Freedom Front Plus in North West, appeals for calm. "Everyone are doing what they can to prevent the land grab to continue but we must act according to the law. We ask the community to stay calm," he said.

He was at Stilfontein SAPS on Tuesday 23 July where a representative of the national Department of Public Works opened a case against the illegal occupying of their land. "The area now includes three

owners which complicates it a bit more," Du Toit said.

Stilfontein police spokesperson Sgt Molly Booyens confirmed that SAPS opened an inquiry about the portion of land being occupied.

Ntswaki Makgetha, Matlosana Municipality spokesperson, said they urge illegal occupants to vacate the premises within seven days or they will institute legal proceedings against the occupants.

These threats does not deter the community. Makume said: "The removal of the Khuma residents from that land that we call Mama Winnie Avenue, will drive us to the streets and that is what we try to avoid. Then surely we will have an illegal total shut down strike."



Photo: Mohanoe Khiba.