

■ SHUTDOWN

Anti-crime protests hit city

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WIDESPREAD demonstrations against crime in the province yesterday saw hundreds of people take to the streets, demanding an end to violence.

The Total Shutdown Movement, which was behind the action, included residents from Bishop Lavis, Hanover Park, Bonteheuwel, Elsies River, Beacon Valley, Tafelsig and Khayelitsha.

Demonstrators protested against what they said was the government's inaction regarding increasing crime levels, gangster violence and poverty.

The protest followed similar action last year, also under the Total Shutdown Movement banner.

Bishop Lavis resident Rodney Zeeberg said last year, residents had made the same demands to police, but nothing had happened.

"A year ago, the Total Shutdown Movement took to the streets, demanding that the government hear our plea on the Cape Flats. We are tired of gangsterism and the violence that is happening in our areas.

"Our streets are being taken over by criminals and drugs have become a norm. We cannot continue like this; this is not normal at all," Zeeberg said.

"We have engaged the government on all spheres for the last five years. Our communities are still the same; nothing has changed. Instead, we have more drug dealers on our streets.

"We are now working with the taxi operators, as the crime has escalated rapidly; commuters in the taxis are now getting robbed."

"Taxi drivers had joined in the protest because their problem is the local gangs tax them, they have to pay these gangs to operate in the area. The criminals are not even scared to shoot fires during the daylight," Zeeberg said.

Police spokesperson George Mjiwu said police used stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse crowds after they refused to leave.

"A case of public violence is under investigation following 150 violent protesters who blocked the roads at the corners of Lavis Drive and 35th Avenue, Bishop Lavis. One taxi was impounded and one arrest has been made."

City traffic spokesperson Richard Coleman said officials had monitored the action throughout the day.

Zeeberg said residents' demands included greater police visibility, social development initiatives for the youth, and more public works programmes.