

'TAKE OVER MORE HOUSES' - EFF

EC party boss encourages occupation of any empty building or home

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Eastern Cape EFF boss Yazini Tetyana has called for the immediate occupation of vacant buildings and RDP houses, vowing that being arrested would not deter them.

Basing his call on what he said was the constitution stating that people should have shelter, Tetyana said it did not matter who the unoccupied buildings and RDP houses belonged to; people should occupy them whenever they saw vacant properties.

However, constitutional law expert Pierre de Vos warned against people heeding the call, saying what Tetyana was advocating for was lawlessness — which would result in people being arrested.

Tetyana was mistaking the Freedom Charter with the Bill of Rights when he said all people shall have shelter, De Vos said.

However, Tetyana told the Daily Dispatch that they would continue occupying vacant properties.

"It doesn't matter who it belongs to. Let people have shelter as the constitution of this country directs.

"Any building which is unoccupied and our people see it, they must occupy it with immediate effect.

"That includes RDP houses that have been sitting for many years without allocation [to the] people. They must go in," he charged, but would not be drawn into saying which buildings they were targeting.

"Our people know what's occupied and what's not."

Tetyana's calls come after the Daily Dispatch reported on Tuesday that the Eastern Cape department of public works would be back in the East London high court to try to have the EFF members who hijacked the Northdene Complex in Southernwood, East London, legally evicted from the government building.

Firebrand EFF leader Julius Malema will also be back at the Bloemfontein high court on November 8 for allegedly inciting his supporters to grab land during a speech at the EFF's elective conference in Bloemfontein in 2014.

But Tetyana said they were unshaken by being dragged to

court. "The system will not change itself without being pushed. If it means we face whatever for our actions, we will. We are not afraid of court."

Asked if the red berets would foot the bill when people were arrested for heeding his call, Tetyana said he could not commit to the party paying the legal bills.

"We are not committing [to that]. People must be conscious of their actions — that they have implications. The state we're operating under can arrest them.

"We can't commit and say we're going to get them bail and all of that. We are calling for this thing, we are not ashamed of it.

"But unfortunately we can't guarantee any action from the state. People are poor and they have no places to stay," he said.

Secretary-general Godrich Gardee declined to comment, saying: "Read the manifesto and talk to [Tetyana]. You don't need to talk to us."

In its manifesto for the May 8 general and provincial elections, the EFF promised that they would convert unused state buildings into affordable housing for the poor, offering people long-term, secured leaseholds to these buildings — were they to be elected into governance.

The Eastern Cape, has, in recent years experienced a surge in the number of illegal RDP house occupations, with municipalities resorting to court to evict them. In East London and Ntabankulu, residents who illegally occupied houses were dramatically evicted this year, and houses that had been built on municipal land were flattened.

Buffalo City Metro spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said: "Any encouragement for people to undertake illegal actions against the state is irresponsible and should be discouraged."

Human settlements MEC Nonkqubela Pieters' spokesperson, Masiza Mazizi, said they would also resort to legal action where RDP houses were illegally occupied.

"The department doesn't expect any individual or any political party to occupy houses that do not belong to them. In unfortunate circumstances where this could occur, the department will be forced to pursue legal processes in this regard," he said.

De Vos said Tetyana was being irresponsible for making the calls.