

Province says no electricity will be given as occupation is unlawful

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The email read: "They are not employed as security personnel for the occupants nor do they have a contract to keep the occupants safe. The prevention of criminal activity remains the role of SAPS and the security personnel are not authorised to assist individuals in this regard."

Residents say the Western Cape government's security and mobile solar-powered flood lights are of little use to them.

"When we moved in here there were electricity and water but it wasn't long before it was switched off. We could not drink the water; in fact it was yellowish and not drinkable. The toilets are not flushing; you have to go to the Waterfront to use a toilet."

The DTPW responded by stating that: "The Western Cape Government (WCG) has repeatedly confirmed that access to free electricity is not a constitutional right of any person and that no electricity will be provided at the site by the owner given that the occupation is unlawful. The current occupants are not lessees and the position of the WCG is not akin to that of a landlord. The internal electrical infrastructure has in any event been vandalised to such a degree that it cannot be repaired prudently."

According to Ms Gqoboka, there is alcohol and drug abuse, and celebrations can last for hours, if not days and nights in the building.

"We have reached out to the police to assist us but we have not heard anything. I'm sure drugs are

being sold here and that there's a shebeen here. There are unsavoury characters that come here and it's just not safe."

Despite the shortcomings of life at Ahmed Kathrada House, Ms Gqoboka claims that the occupiers are unwilling to go and that the government should intervene to stop the rot.

She goes on to say that the lack of social housing, particularly the dissatisfaction about the Tafelberg property sale, sparked the occupation.

"Most of us work in these areas of Sea Point and Green Point, at the Waterfront, so it's accessible, we can walk to work. We are willing to meet with government to discuss a way forward as we know that affordability is subjective, but we need to meet with them. The government can transform this place into affordable, safe housing and we can assist them with the screening process. It's possible, it's doable and we want to work with them."

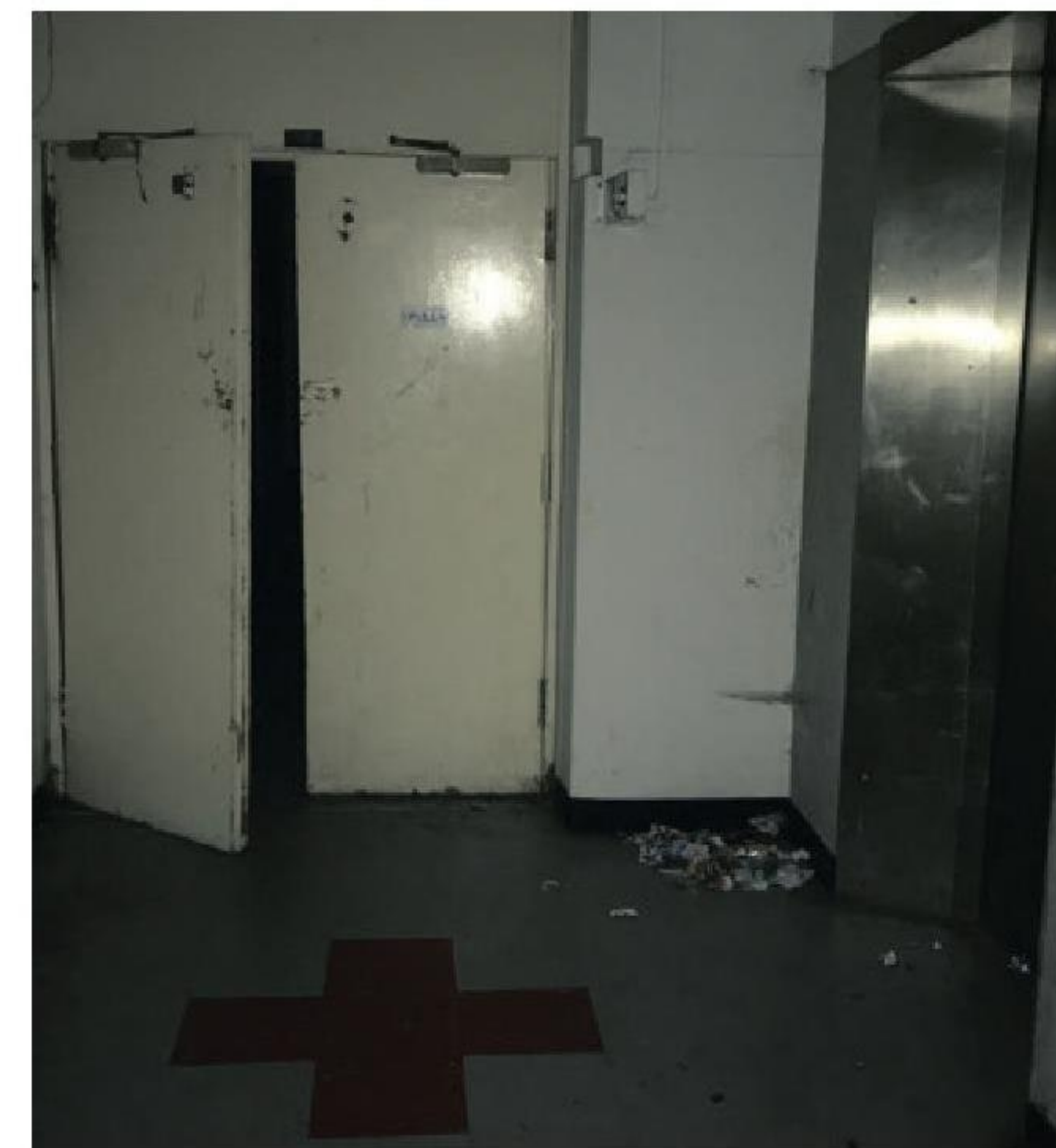
Ms Gqoboka is a member of Reclaim the City (RTC), a housing movement, and together with Ndifuna Ukwazi, an activist organisation and legal centre, filed an application to halt the sale of the Tafelberg property, which was granted by the Western Cape High Court last year.

"For the past five years we have taken the concerns to Jacqui Gooch and the department (Transport and Public Works) she heads up," said Luyanda Mtamzeli, a political organiser from Ndifuna Ukwazi.

"It's the issue of electricity, it's security and safety of the people.



■ **Left: Paint peeling off the walls, loose electrical wires are standard features.**



■ **Right: The former nurses' home is in a poor state.**

"In 2018 and 2019 two RTC leaders were killed, justice has not been served, neither is the safety of the residents guaranteed."

He was referring to the fatal stabbing of Zamuxolo "Rasta" Dolophini in 2018 at Ahmed Kathrada House, which was allegedly carried out by a security officer hired by the provincial government. RTC activist Ayanda Denge was found dead in her flat a year later; both killings remain unsolved.

"The City of Cape Town and the provincial government show no interest in any way to assist the residents. They talk about this place and its people in the media, but they have not been here, they have not seen this place. They should come here and talk to the residents to plan a way forward, we have invited them but they have not honoured our invitations," Mr Mtamzeli said.

He added, "There is no social housing in the inner city, if you look at the Atlantic seaboard there is no social housing. The site that was earmarked for social housing, Tafelberg, they (government) tried to sell it."

"There is a huge need for social housing and the residents are going to stay here for as long as it takes for the solutions to be put in place."

The DTPW has provided Ahmed Kathrada House with solar-powered lights to illuminate the outdoors.

"They spend money on security guards and these flood lights but they don't want to spend money on installing electricity."

"There are policies that provincial government can follow to build affordable housing but there is no political will to do so. They're lighting up the outside but it's dark inside," Mr Mtamzeli said.

According to the DTPW: "The stated intention of the DTPW is to redevelop this site, with a focus on inclusionary housing – as part of the Somerset Precinct redevelopment and the demolition of the current building will be a necessity."

"Planning towards this end has been proceeding."

"The DTPW is currently working on options in relation to emergency housing so that engagements with the occupiers may commence as soon as that is finalised."