

Minister of Human Settlements Lindiwe Sisulu

SETTLEMENTS

KZN to pay R100m for military veterans' housing

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THE KwaZulu-Natal provincial government has moved to set aside almost R100million for military veterans' housing projects across the province.

Minister of Human Settlements Lindiwe Sisulu and the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Peggy Nkonyeni, met military veterans on Monday to resolve the Aloe Ridge housing invasion issue.

Sisulu said on Tuesday that for the qualifying military veterans occupying the Aloe Ridge housing project, the department had found a piece of land on which it intended to build suitable housing.

"As a caring government, we made a commitment that we will provide our military veterans with houses, training and medical assistance, among other things. We have provided some houses for our military veterans, but others are yet to benefit and this is what we are going to prioritise going forward," Sisulu said.

Provincial Human Settlements and Public Works spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi told the African News Agency (ANA) yesterday that the department had located an area in the Msunduzi Municipality where housing would be built for those veterans who occupy Aloe Ridge.

"For military veterans, the subsidy amount is not the same as your typical RDP (reconstruction and development programme) housing. There is an additional amount that is put in by the Department of Military Veterans," Baloyi said.

Construction of the Aloe Ridge housing project in Westgate, Pietermaritzburg, began in 2014. The project cost an estimated R353m.

Aloe Ridge was designated as a social housing project for lower- to middle-income earners, particularly those earning between R3000 and R7000 a month. It was subsidised by the KZN provincial government and managed by the NGO Capital City Housing.

The construction of Aloe Ridge was separated into three phases, each consisting of just over 300 units per phase.

Upon completion of the last 300 units in February 2018, military veterans in KZN invaded the project and occupied the housing.

Menzi Mkhize, the regional secretary of the Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association (MKMVA), said they were tired of waiting for the government to listen to their distress calls.

"In 2015, we marched to city hall to demand that we get houses and other forms of assistance, and we have been waiting ever since. In Msunduzi Municipality, there is not even a desk that deals with matters related to veterans, which is an illustration of the low regard for us," Mkhize said.

The situation escalated in October 2018 after some residents, claiming to be locals who were promised business opportunities, stormed the housing and took up arms against the security company.

This week, the issue seemed to have reached its close, as Sisulu emphasised that the government had a responsibility to respond to the plight of the military veterans. She said that municipalities across the province should heed this call and make housing available for qualifying military veterans. |

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