

MAINTENANCE

SAPS evict Natalia Court illegal tenants

SINENHLANHLA ZUNGU

IT WAS around the year 2000 that the state of Natalia Court began deteriorating with a change in committees that were in charge of running the building.

This was according to a retired policeman who was a member of one of the first black families to begin living in the police barracks.

The retired officer, who did not want to be named, remembered how the building was kept in good condition, with his three children enjoying the place, with a clean swimming pool and overlooking the old Durban Drive-in.

Yesterday the SAPS began operations to evict people it said had been occupying the building for years who were not police officers.

The former resident said that he lived in the building for almost 10 years with his family from the early 1990s and had seen the state of the building worsen until he moved in 2000.

Yesterday tenants, including police officers and their families and other illegal tenants, were evacuated.

Residents woke to police officers who demanded that illegal occupants leave.

“This matter has been the subject of a long-standing attempt by the SAPS to evict people that have illegally occupied state-owned buildings in Durban. Some of the illegal occupants are SAPS members, others are private citizens,” said police spokesperson Colonel Jay Naicker.

Natalia Court on Stalwart Simelane (Stanger) Street is among a number of derelict buildings due for renovation.

During the financial year of 2010/2011, R15 million was allocated to renovating such buildings. However, with the tenants refusing to leave, the funds were sent back to the SAPS, according to Department of Public Works spokesperson Thamsanqa Mchunu.

“This is a long-standing issue that has been stuck with SAPS. The Department of Public works was supposed to renovate the buildings for the SAPS, but that never happened because the residents refused to vacate the buildings. The DPW will always do its work on the instruction of the client department. The allocated R15m was sent back to the SAPS,” said Mchunu.

During the eviction tenants refused to leave the building, which saw police fence off the building and thereafter

monitor those who entered and left.

“The buildings are condemned and need to be renovated. However, the illegal occupants have refused to move out. The SAPS was engaged through the courts to have these illegal occupants removed so that the SAPS can renovate the buildings for use,” said Naicker.

An operation was conducted in April of buildings awaiting renovations which resulted in warnings and fines for 32 illegal occupants.

“Three are police officers and five are civilian employees of the SAPS whilst 24 were private citizens. These operations will be ongoing,” said Naicker.

The Daily News spoke to three tenants regarding the matter.

“The police only allow cops inside the building and I am not a cop. How-

ever, I have been living in the building because my uncle is a cop and rents the flat. We should have been at least given notices.

“My belongings are in there and I do not know what to do at this point in time,” said Samkelo Zungu.

Scelo Zondi said: “Not knowing where I will sleep tonight is very stressful. What they are doing to us right now is inhumane, especially in that they are police too.”

A Natalia Court tenant who wished to remain anonymous said: “The last eviction notice we were served with was back in 2018 and the high court has not got back to us about the matter. It is not fair that they came in and smashed our windows and doors without having a court order. We do understand that the



POLICEMEN check if tenants appear on the register, after they were evicted. | TUMI PAKKIES African News Agency (ANA)

building is not conducive for human settlement, but they must at least give us an alternative.”