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The Khoisan who have been camping on the lawn of the Union Buildings in Pretoria for two and a half years have now set up a greenhouse in which they want to grow dagga.

They also want to increase the size of their group to 100 before December to exert more pressure on government to meet their demands.

The DA will ask questions in Parliament, not only about the Khoisan’s tents, but also about a political party founder and one Khoisan camper who was apparently completely naked.

Leanne de Jager, the DA’s regional campaign coordinator in Gauteng and ward councillor in the Tshwane metro council, told City Press’ sister publication Rapport this week that the Khoisan squatters’ site was unsightly and horrible.

According to her, it was also illegal, since it was on a key national location, as well as a national heritage site.

“What will happen if such squatting also starts at other places, such as the Voortrekker Monument?” asked De Jager.

However, King Khoisan SA (who stresses that his title is not chief), insists that the group will not leave until their demands are met.

“Government thinks we’ll either die of old age here or [eventually] go home. But if we leave without results, it will look as if we’ve given up,” he says.

The Khoisan have four demands:

- They want to be declared South Africa’s first nation, “because the cave paintings say so too”;
- They want official status for Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by all the Khoisan tribes, albeit in different dialects;
- They want possession of their ancestors’ land; and
- They want to be classified not as coloured, but as Khoisan.

However, King Khoisan SA adds that the group’s intention was not to raise alarm: “We also don’t want excessive numbers here, because people mustn’t be afraid to come to the Union Buildings.”

He says that the last feedback the group received from government was when the late Jackson Mthembu, then minister in the presidency, visited them in November.

“The minister said we were in full view of government and had to be helped. We made a medicine pack of herbs for him in good faith. We were shocked when we heard he’d died of Covid-19 in January, because our medicine’s good. God alone knows what happened there.”

The group erected the first of two greenhouses in April. “We want to plant indigenous plants in it. One option is to grow marijuana, which is an immune-booster and very good for pain,” says the king.

He is angry that someone broke off the branches of “five dagga plants that were like beautiful, young girls”, which had already been planted.



DEFIANT King Khoisan SA and his fellow clan members have been living on the lawn next to the Mandela statue in front of the Union Buildings for years

PHOTOS: DEON RAATH



GONE GREEN The Khoisan living outside the Union Buildings have set up a greenhouse in which they plan to grow dagga



KILL THE PAIN Marijuana, which the clan believes is an immune-booster and the best pain reliever

We will not MOVE

Dagga blooms at the Union Buildings in Pretoria as the Khoisan who have set up homes on the lawn settle in further

This marijuana, he adds, had to be harvested early, but there are many other young plants in the soil.

“We have different strains and try to raise the standard. We don’t sell marijuana - we’ll give it to you. We make tea from it and smoke it. At one time, we made juice with a pineapple and lemon flavour.”

The greenhouse is currently the sleeping place of a guest of the Khoisan campers, Byron Bernard, who grows dagga and is an expert on its medicinal uses, says King Khoisan SA.

Marquard Pienaar, founder of the Federal Party SA, has

been living in his tent on the same terrace as the Khoisan for a year, but they do not share his views.

He is demanding that South Africa adopt the Swiss model of federalism.

According to King Khoisan SA, Pienaar arrived at the Union Buildings “and said he couldn’t afford a flat. He said he was homeless, but he had a different agenda. Then he handed out flyers and put up signs.”

Pienaar says his tent was initially on the Khoisan’s side of the Nelson Mandela statue on the terrace, “but then they shot arrows. A soccer ball was kicked against my tent. They threw spears past it. We don’t talk to each other.”

In fact, adds Pienaar, he and a Khoisan member are engaged in a dispute in the Magistrates’ Court over a protection order that the campers want against him.

The king says that, in another tent on a higher terrace is a man “whose head is mixed up”.

“He walked around naked and the police came.”

De Jager said that, while she sympathised with the Khoisan’s demands, the squatting could no longer be tolerated. The DA, she said, would continue pressurising government to “restore the Unions Buildings’ lawns to their former glory” by intervening immediately and moving all the squatters elsewhere.

The party’s shadow ministers of public works and of police will raise questions about this in Parliament.