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PRASA

Activists in dark over train track families

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COMMUNITY activists were left further in the dark yesterday over the relocation of families living along the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) central railway line.

This as Human Settlements Minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi, Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga, and Public Works Minister Sihle Zikalala met with community stakeholders in Philippi. Mxoleleni Ngutyana, Siyahhala informal settlement activist in Langa, said residents were ready to be relocated as the conditions they lived under were dangerous.

"The City had come here with officials promising to improve sanitation problems but nothing.

"More than six or seven householders are forced to use one temporary toilet. Some community leaders opted to run away because they are scared of residents who they have been giving updates to things that don't come to pass and are viewed as liars placing

their lives at risk," said Ngutyana.

A Philippi activist said she was worried about returning to residents with no news about their relocation.

Kubayi said the City ignored the request to send a representative to the meeting yesterday, which was a "clear indication of not willing to cooperate".

"This has given us the basis to really try and get the declared dispute with the City to be fast tracked. Two lands have been identified for the relocations under the Housing Development Agency (HDA).

"The wedge piece of land has been bought by the HDA to relocate over 1200 households in Langa. HDA has submitted the rezoning application. This process is expected to be concluded by March 2024. We have voiced concerns about the lengthy public process.

"To ensure that the Central Line between Khayelitsha and Philippi is resumed, Prasa has identified Stock-Road for temporary relocation of 891 households currently occupying a railway line," she said.

Kubayi accused the City of wrongly influencing neighbouring communities to reject the families to be relocated in their areas, using a "not in our neighbourhood campaign".

Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis refuted statements that the City was invited but failed to send representatives claiming "it was a ministerial imbizo".

"Two separate land use management applications were submitted by the HDA consultants on August 10, 2023 for the relocation of the occupants on the Prasa owned land onto two portions of land.

"The applications, however, were incorrectly submitted. The City has been working with the consultants to ensure it is done correctly in terms of the legislation governing development applications. No resubmission has been made to date.

"Section 12.4 of the Intergovernmental Protocol read with the Municipal Planning By-Law makes it clear that the role of the City in this regard is as a planning authority," said Hill-Lewis.