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Court allows city to evict foreigners

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The Western Cape High Court in Cape Town has granted the city and the departments of home affairs and public works permission to evict foreigners from Wingfield and Paint City in Bellville.

In June, the city approached the court in an effort to evict the remaining 360 foreigners who had been illegally occupying the area since the Covid pandemic began in 2020.

At the time, mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis said the state and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees had offered alternative living arrangements to them.

While some accepted the offers, others refused, demanding that the government relocate them to Canada or Europe.

Home Affairs Minister Leon Schreiber said the city's move was a result of the department's newly launched Operation New Broom.

This is the latest technology-driven initiative aimed at arresting, convicting and deporting undocumented foreigners occupying public spaces.

"The department of home affairs recently launched Operation New Broom to signal our commitment to enforcing the rule of law when it comes to illegal immigrants occupying public spaces," said Schreiber.

On Friday, the city announced that it would carry out the eviction in accordance with the court's order, which is to be executed by the sheriff in person and as translated.

The mayor said many of the foreigners are in family units and meaningfully engaged in self-sustaining economic activity.

They remain in unlawful occupation with the aim of leveraging this for repatriation to First World countries, he said.

Hill-Lewis said the government cannot meet the demands of foreigners for relocation to Europe or Canada. The government cannot continue to bear expenses related to these sites, either.

He said the sites were never intended to provide permanent accommodation but, rather, temporary shelter during the Covid pandemic.

"This joint application aims to restore these sites to their original public use and to bring an end to the undignified conditions for the sake of the unlawful occupants and the general public, as these sites have generated a great deal of public complaints, including traffic, crime and waste challenges," said Hill-Lewis.



Home affairs launched Operation New Broom to signal our commitment to enforcing the rule of law.

Leon Schreiber
Home affairs minister