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Police living in fear of criminals at Alexandra barracks

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Police officers and their families in the Alexandra Police Station barracks are living in appalling conditions and under siege from criminal vagrants who have invaded portions of the unkept buildings.

The vagrants who live on the police property are reportedly even breaking into the cars parked there and stripping parts from the building.

With no clear accountability from either the South African Police Service (SAPS) or the Department of Public Works residents describe an environment where basic services have collapsed.

Persistent water and electricity outages, overgrown grass, and uncollected refuse have turned the barracks into an uninhabitable space, residents said.

To make matters worse, officers report that their monthly rent has skyrocketed from R900 to R6000 in just three months – without any apparent improvements to their living conditions.

Adding to their distress, some officers were ordered to vacate the barracks in July 2024. While some complied, others submitted reasons why they could not leave and have since been left in limbo, with services gradually being withdrawn.

"Some of us left and others were given the opportunity to motivate reasons to remain and that was the end of it. They stopped collecting the refuse, we now rely on burning the garbage. It is always smelling here," said an officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The abandoned barracks are now home to vagrants, who not only occupy the empty rooms but also apparently engage in criminal activities such as stealing water pipes and electricity cables. "They told us that we need to leave because they wanted to turn these quarters into offices. We sleep with vagrants here. We park our cars outside; they break the locks and steal our car parts."

"A neighbour's battery and wheel caps were stolen recently. They have stolen water pipes that supply water to an entire block of barracks."

"The people that live in those barracks now have to walk to our side of the barracks just to get water," the officer added.



The Alexandra Police Station barracks have been left abandoned for the past three months. Grass has overgrown, refuse has not been collected and vagrants have been occupying some of the abandoned rooms. **PHOTOS: ZAMA MYEZA**

Despite reporting the issues to their own police station, officers claim that no action has been taken.

"No case was even opened. I live with five of my children, with one being four years old."

"I don't have any other home apart from the one I have here. Some of us, those who can afford it, are still building houses to live in but until they are done these are the conditions we have been subjected to," another officer said.

When *The Witness* reached out to SAPS for clarification on the lack of maintenance, the department shifted responsibility to the Department of Public Works.

"The maintenance of the said barracks is done by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and such they will be better suited to



respond to your enquiry. However, there have not been any new cases of theft reported to the police which happened at the said barracks," said KwaZulu-Natal SAPS spokesperson

Robert Netshiunda.

However, the Department of Public Works refuted this claim, insisting that the barracks are the police's responsibility.



"I have been informed that the SAPS manage the living quarters, enquiries should therefore be referred to them. We do not get involved in the operational matters of the SAPS such as management of living quarters," said James de Villiers, media liaison officer and spokesperson in the Office of The Minister in the Department of Public Works.

With each department pointing fingers at the other, police officers and their families said they remain caught in the middle, subjected to worsening conditions with no accountability.

"They at least need to communicate with us and tell us what is happening. Instead, we are in the dark and being thrown from office to office. These are our lives. One would think that we feel safe and secure living in a police station, but that has really not been the case," said another frustrated officer.

President Ramaphosa honours fallen soldiers

President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday paid tribute to the soldiers killed in the line of duty in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) on Saturday confirmed the death of one more soldier, bringing the death toll to 14. The latest casualty comes amid intensifying hostilities in the eastern DRC, where South African troops, as part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) peacekeeping mission, are engaged in efforts to restore stability.

Paying tribute to the fallen soldiers, Ramaphosa acknowledged their bravery and sacrifice in pursuit of peace.

"On behalf of the government and the people of our country, I express our sincerest condolences to their families, their loved ones, and colleagues. We bow our heads in honour of their heroic and gallant fight for peace. We honour and mourn them."

Ramaphosa said all necessary support was being provided to the families of the deceased and injured, while arrangements for the repatriation of the fallen soldiers' remains were underway.

The crisis in the eastern DRC prompted an emergency meeting of SADC leaders in Zimbabwe last Friday, where regional heads of state condemned the recent attacks by the M23 rebel group and called for a collective response to halt the advance of the insurgents.

The violent conflict in the region has raised concerns about broader instability, with South African Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Ronald Lamola, warning that escalating tensions between the DRC and Rwanda could spiral into a full-scale regional war. Lamola has engaged in high-level discussions with Rwandan and DRC officials, advocating for a ceasefire agreement to de-escalate the situation.

South African forces, alongside troops from Malawi and Tanzania, have faced relentless attacks from rebel groups, leading to multiple casualties among peacekeepers.

“We call on all parties to this conflict to fully embrace the current diplomatic efforts that are aimed at finding a peaceful resolution ... We must silence the guns on our continent for the attainment of inclusive development and prosperity.”

tions under the Nairobi Process. "The territorial integrity of the DRC must be respected in accordance with the United Nations Charter on the respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of other states," Ramaphosa said.

"We call on all parties to this conflict to fully embrace the current diplomatic efforts that are aimed at finding a peaceful resolution, including honouring the Luanda Process agreements."

"We must silence the guns on our continent for the attainment of inclusive development and prosperity."

Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Angie Motshekga, her deputy Bantu Holomisa, and other officials have also extended their condolences to the families of the deceased and the entire SANDF community.

Meanwhile, the SANDF has released the names of the 13 South African soldiers who have lost their lives in the conflict. The