

**Publication:** SundayTimesGauteng - Main

**Reach:** 125000

**Title:** Communal taps 'locked to extract money from poor'

**AVE:**R 135751.00

**Publish date:** 23 Mar 2025

**Author:** PHILANI NOMBEMBE

**Page:** 8



Farinaas Lackay explains why the communal tap has been locked.



## Communal taps 'locked to extract money from poor'

By PHILANI NOMBEMBE

● Extortionists stand accused of demanding payments for essential public services, including access to water and sanitation, at an informal settlement in Cape Town.

City officials said extortionists had locked taps and toilets in Cathkin Village, demanding payment from residents as a precondition for access to free basic services.

Zahid Badroodien, the city's member of the mayoral committee for water and sanitation, said his directorate had been alerted to incidents in Cathkin Village where taps and toilets had allegedly been locked.

"It is unacceptable that extortionists are trying to make money by restricting vulnerable residents' access to free basic services unless they are prepared to pay an illegal fee," Badroodien said.

"The city has zero tolerance for extortionists. Residents are urged to call the city's tip-off line to report these incidents anonymously. The information provided can assist law enforcement in taking action to hold those responsible accountable."

However, some Cathkin Village residents this week denied the claims, accusing a fellow resident of "spreading lies".

Farinaas Lackay, who identified herself as the settlement's "manager", insisted that no-one had been forced to pay for water. She said the settlement's 13-member committee had decided to lock the communal tap – situated outside the settlement – between 7pm and 7am to prevent theft and water wastage.

"These taps are open from 7am to 7pm. People vandalise them, and we have to fix them because we need the water. We initially had three taps, but we closed the others. Drug users come, steal the taps and sell them," she said.

Lackay said about 73 people lived in Cathkin Village, established on department of public works land in 2018. Residents use portable toilets provided by the city.

Cathkin Village committee member Samantha van der Rhee suggested a dispute over legal fees in respect of pending eviction proceedings played a role in the allegations reaching city officials. She believed a disgruntled resident was to blame.

"That resident doesn't contribute to legal fees, which we all pay for. We have a court case. She doesn't participate in anything. It's like she's living on an island," said Van der Rhee.

Van der Rhee claimed the resident approached ward councillor Anthony Moses, who then took the matter to Badroodien.

"Every resident contributes R100 a month for legal fees. That's not for water," she said.

"On March 11, the police were here to investigate and found nothing. On March 12, law enforcement officers arrived – one van and three cars. They were supposed to find locked toilets and taps, but there weren't any."

But Moses says he has "written proof" residents are being extorted.

"There are much deeper issues which I have asked to be investigated," said Moses. "I don't take these allegations lightly. It's a human rights violation. The distribution of water and sanitation are non-negotiable. I have even asked the station commander to intervene."

Moses said that as the deputy chairperson of the SA Local Government Association in the Western Cape, he was inundated with similar complaints across the province.