

Annexure "A"



home affairs

Department:
Home Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



public works
& infrastructure

Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE MINISTERS OF HOME AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE RELOCATION OF THE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES FROM THE CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH AND STREETS OF CAPE TOWN

05 April 2020

1. The recent events unfolding in Cape Town regarding the relocation of asylum seekers and refugees, including untrue statements peddled by the officials of the City of Cape Town and the Executive Mayor in the public domain has compelled us to take an unusual step to issue this Joint Press Statement. Thus far we have exercised restraint in the face of extreme provocative press statements attributed to the officials of the City of Cape Town.
2. The removal of the asylum seekers and refugees from the Central Methodist Church and Greenmarket Square has been a subject of two Court judgements issued on 17 February 2020 and 17 March 2020.
3. In all instances, the City of Cape Town failed to enforce its by-laws even after being ordered to do so by the Court. It is this dragging of feet by the City of Cape Town that led to the hearing by the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs on 10 March 2020.
4. The Portfolio Committee instructed the Department of Home Affairs and the City of

Cape Town to work out together a comprehensive plan to resolve the impasse.

5. In executing the resolution of the Portfolio Committee, the Minister of Home Affairs initiated a meeting with the Premier of the Western Cape, Mr Alan Winde, the Executive Mayor, Mr Dan Plato and MEC for COGTA on 24 March 2020. The meeting became more urgent due to the Declaration of the National State of Disaster by the President.
6. It was agreed at the meeting that the Premier would through the Minister of Home Affairs request the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure to approve the land identified by the Provincial Government. The request was not successful as it was discovered that the land identified by the Provincial Government belonged to the Military. The Premier requested that other pieces of land be identified by the Minister of Public Works. The land subsequently identified was rejected by the Provincial Government. There were exchanges back and forth as the City of Cape Town kept on rejecting pieces of land after another for unknown reasons. This is despite the fact that the Minister of Home Affairs indicated in the letter to the Premier that he had reason to believe that the City owns vast tracks of land which could be made available.
7. The Minister of Public Works invited the Executive Mayor for site visits which led to the identification of Paint City and Wingfield for temporary shelter of asylum seekers and refugees. The agreement to this effect was formally recorded in exchange of letters between the Minister of Public Works and the Executive Mayor, Mr Dan Plato (which letters are readily available).

Involvement of the South African Police Service ("SAPS")

8. The initial letter from the Premier, Mr Alan Winde also included a request for the SAPS to assist in the removal of the asylum seekers and refugees from the Church and the streets of Cape Town. This request was made through the Minister of Home Affairs who approached the Minister of Police to assist.
9. On 1 April 2020, a meeting involving the relevant stakeholders, including the City of Cape Town was held and a comprehensive plan was developed to remove the asylum seekers and refugees from the Church the following morning on 2 April 2020.
10. All the stakeholders were surprised to receive a letter dated 1 April 2020 at about 18h00 from the Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town addressed to the Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS in which the Executive Mayor accused the Provincial Commissioner of intending to take control of the "*Paint City site*" was "*unlawful*" and that the City was withdrawing from the operation as the City had identified the site for the homeless people and that a marquee which was erected by the Department of Public Works did not comply with the COVID-19 Disaster Regulations. At the time the City of Cape Town had already reneged on the provision of tents, sanitation and water as initially agreed.
11. Over and above the letter, the officials of the City of Cape Town embarked on some clandestine activities to disrupt the plan and evacuation of the asylum seekers and refugees. These activities included contacting bus operators to discourage them from ferrying the refugees and veil threats to the provincial officials of the Departments of Public Works and Transport.

12. Despite the above activities, the operation to evacuate the asylum seekers and refugees was successfully carried out by the SAPS assisted by the officials of the Departments of Home Affairs, Public Works, Social Development and Health. The Metro Police of the City of Cape Town unashamedly joined the crowd as spectators. The Minister of Home Affairs addressed another letter to the Premier and recorded the activities of the officials of the City of Cape Town and the Executive Mayor.
13. The Minister of Public Works set the record straight in the letter dated 3 April 2020:

"It needs to be made very clear that the agreement was reached by yourself as the Executive Mayor of Cape Town and myself when we went on site together and then communicated to Minister Motsoaledi, the Minister of Home Affairs who is responsible for these matters, was that the Bellville Paint City site was for the non-nationals and the portion of Wingfield (Erven 167613, RE 149174 and 167614 Goodwood), plus Erven 110472, 110473 and 110474 Cape Town, were for the homeless of Cape Town and for the overflow of non-nationals that could not be accommodated on the Bellville site, and not for the non-nationals only as stated in your correspondence".

"In conclusion, I am extremely disappointed that in this time of crisis the basic humanity and upholding the principles of the Constitution of South Africa have been tossed aside by the City of Cape Town, in order to facilitate a selfish land-related agenda. This is not in any way acting in good faith. I am also aware that your agreement with me, Mr Mayor, was overruled by Alderman Nielson and Alderman JP Smith".

14. The conduct of the officials of the City took place when the country was already under lockdown requiring swift and decisive action. Indeed the City of Cape Town showed that it is able to provide the necessary service when it hurriedly erected the

tents for the homeless people during the weekend on 4 and 5 April 2020.

15. In the circumstances, the Press Statement issued by the Executive Mayor on 5 April 2020 is clearly intended to mislead the public about the true state of affairs. Similar statements were attributed to Mr JP Smith, MMC for Safety and Security who has been distorting the facts to suit their own unknown agenda. The attitude of the City of Cape Town deserves to be condemned in the strongest terms possible. What the country needs in this time of crisis is responsible and visionary leadership and not misguided bickering.

Media enquiries:

Siya Qoza

Spokesperson to the Minister of Home Affairs: Dr Aaron Motsoaledi

Cell: 082 898 1657

Zara Nicholson

Media Liaison Officer to Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure: Patricia de Lille (MP)

Mobile: 066 0183 395