

## Shots fired over disputed housing project

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Battles between backyarders and informal settlement residents flared up again this week over the allocation of houses in a new housing project, with a backyarder reportedly opening fire to defend himself against more than 100 attackers.

Thembalani Mpambaniso was allegedly attacked by residents of the informal settlement during the early hours of Tuesday morning while he was visiting his girlfriend, according to residents of Khayelitsha K-Section informal settlement, in Makhaza, and where the 163-unit project is being built.

Mpambaniso, who has been accused of “spying” on developments at the housing project, has now gone into hiding as he fears for his life.

A resident, who would only give her name as Akhona, said men from the informal settlement were called together during the early hours of Tuesday morning. Many were armed with pangas and sticks and she thought they were setting out on a security patrol, but instead they headed for a nearby house where Mpambaniso was visiting.

“Within 30 minutes, I saw a car and a man came out with a gun and fired shots. Everyone was screaming, more backyarders came shouting. People were running and hiding.”

A community leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said residents had organised patrols to prevent backyarders sabotaging the housing project, adding that a home in the informal settlement had been petrol bombed on Monday night. “We didn’t know who did it, that’s why we decided to wake up every man in the area. We were knocking on every house looking for more men to patrol the place.”

Protests over the allocation of housing units between K-Section residents and Makhaza backyarders erupted in August when, for almost two weeks, backyarders burnt tyres and barricaded roads in the area.

The backyarders believed they had been allocated houses in 2009, which has been confirmed by human settlements MEC Bonginkosi Madikizela’s spokesperson Bruce Oom but they appear to no longer be on the beneficiary list now that construction has begun.

Backyarders allege the previous ward councillor, Thobile Ludidi, sold their places off to people in K-Section.

K-Section residents briefly staged their own protest in retaliation against the backyarders in August.

Again, in the first week of this month, protest flared up when backyarders prevented contractors from accessing the site to begin construction.

Arrested protesters appeared before the high court on September 7 but public violence charges were dropped against all but the present ward councillor, Danile Khatshwa.

Judge Patrick Gamble ordered all parties to refrain from interfering in the housing project.

Provincial police liaison were unable to immediately respond to queries from The New Age. – WCN