

We're not evicting anyone for World Cup - Joburg

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City Council (and others) dispute claims made in London Sunday Times

JOHANNESBURG - The City of Johannesburg has disputed claims made in a recent *Sunday Times* (London) article that Zimbabweans are being targeted for eviction ahead of the football world cup in an effort to 'beautify' the city.

In an article published in the newspaper on April 25 2010 Dan McDougall wrote:

"The Red Ants [employees of a private security company], described as state-sponsored mercenaries by their critics, have become a growing force in the past few months as South African cities have begun a campaign of 'beautification' before the World Cup begins in June. This means clearing away unsightly immigrant squatter camps. This month, more than 100 Zimbabweans were beaten and evicted by Red Ants from a derelict building on the main road to Ellis Park stadium in Johannesburg, one of the football tournament's main venues. It followed a series of Red Ant evictions ordered by the provincial department of public transport along main roads within a mile of the stadium, which will host five matches. Hundreds more Zimbabweans were forcibly evicted from properties in central Johannesburg."

Gaynor Mashamaite-Noyce, a spokesperson for the municipality denied that the city was responsible for these evictions. She stated:

"The City of Johannesburg is not the owner of the buildings mentioned where Red Ant evictions recently took place. These buildings are privately owned. The City has no jurisdiction over the matters of private building owners who seek to enforce their rights in court. In enforcing evictions, the Johannesburg Metro Police Department's duties in assisting with acting out the orders of the court are to cordon off the road to traffic outside buildings when evictions take place. The JMPD has informed me that City of Johannesburg has placed a moratorium on evictions since the beginning of May lasting throughout the World Cup."

Mashamaite-Noyce notes, "Private owners undergo a lengthy legal process (from six months or often longer, even up to two years) to obtain a court eviction to remove tenants if they are living in a building illegally or not paying rent. Thus, though the timing of this eviction coincided with the City's preparations for the World Cup, the timing is relative to when judgements are issued by the court."

Other claims in the article have also been called into question. McDougall states:

"The South African commission for human rights said it had been bombarded by claims from immigrants that they had been warned they would be 'dealt with' after the tournament. Lawrence Mushwana, the commission's chairman, said: 'African foreigners living in South Africa must brace themselves for a new wave of xenophobic attacks after the World Cup is over'."

However, Vincent Moaga, a spokesperson for the South African Human Rights Commission denied the commission had been bombarded with such claims. He also says Mushwana was misquoted by McDougall. Moaga states:

"What the Chairperson was saying is that the ongoing incitement of people during service delivery protests could pose serious challenges later in the year as attention moves from the World Cup to campaigning for the local government elections. We all know that we are still grappling with frustrations over the unmet post 1994 expectations, expectations over access to job opportunities, houses and other issues. And these frustrations are once again going to be brought to the fore as various political and civic formations will be competing for seat on municipal councils around the country."

The *Sunday Times* also claims the "Red Ants also flattened more than 100 shacks within a two-mile radius of the Mbombela stadium, near the Kruger national park. Most of those evicted were Zimbabwean."

Journalists we spoke to at the *Lowvelder*, a Nelspruit-based newspaper, expressed surprise at these claims, saying they were unaware of any such actions. They also noted that the Red Ants don't operate in their area.

(Source: *Politicsweb.co.za*)