

Woodlands squatters obtain interdict

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Pretoria - Tshwane municipality has been ordered to give emergency shelter in the form of tents to people forcefully evicted from an informal camp near Woodlands, east of Pretoria.

The North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria granted the order on Thursday to lawyers acting for relief organisation, Cross of Hope and the squatters, Gilfillan du Plessis Inc.

The two parties said they would seek a contempt order if the council ignored the court's instruction.

They also intended laying criminal charges against those responsible for destroying the shacks, allegedly without a proper court order or notice to the 69 households who have been living on the council-owned land for the past three years.

Acting Judge Jody Kollapen granted an urgent interim court order, giving the city until 20:00 on Thursday night to erect tents for the group of about 300 people.

They were left destitute when their shacks were torn down and its contents torched on Wednesday.

Short-term relief

Cross of Hope treasurer, Alvar Olivier, said in an affidavit his organisation provided immediate short-term relief to people who were temporarily unable to support themselves.

These included a group of squatters in what was known as the "Cemetery Estate" between the Pretoria East cemetery and the Woodlands Boulevard shopping centre.

He said most of the group were South African citizens, although there were also some immigrants from countries such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

The group comprised families, female-headed households with minor children and single young adults. Some of the families had small babies and toddlers.

"The occupiers are almost without exception unskilled labourers who have been working on various constructions sites... since the early 1990's," Olivier said.

"Most, if not all the occupiers are exploited by their employers. They are not paid living wages and what they receive by way of remuneration is hardly enough to provide in their basic nutritional requirements."

- SAPA