

C.T. 24.12.15
Spelling it out

I REFER to the article: "Bulldozers raze 'illegal' structures" (Cape Times, December 23).

Firstly, the use of quotation marks with the word "illegal", is perplexing. It

creates the impression that the City of Cape Town has, in an ad hoc and frivolous manner, decided to label the structures that have been erected on state and City-owned land in Masiphumelele as "illegal".

In fact, a court of law has deemed this as illegal by granting interdicts against those who erect structures or attempt to erect structures illegally on the land in question. The South African National Parks (SANParks) and the City have court orders in place.

I, therefore, do not understand who the newspaper is quoting in its headline.

The first paragraph of the article again perpetuates the narrative of the past few weeks that the actions that have been taken against those attempting to illegally erect structures on City and SANParks-owned land, have been against those directly affected by the fire which occurred on November 29, 2015.

We have emphasised repeatedly that the great majority of those attempting to illegally erect structures were not those who were affected by the fire. In addition, that the attempted erection of structures has occurred on land which was not affected by the fire.

Lastly, no evictions took place. The City removed unoccupied, illegally-erected structures as per the court order. The City and SANParks will be applying for eviction orders pertaining to those illegally erected structures which have become occupied.

The City took a week to carefully register and verify the fire-affected residents. On a daily basis, we see the acute housing need, especially considering that we have the highest rate of urbanisation in the country. But we cannot emphasise enough that the unmanaged proliferation of informal settlements holds extreme negative consequences, among others, that invaded land immediately becomes a fire and flood risk, and the delivery of emergency and other services are jeopardised.

Benedicta van Minnen
Mayoral Committee Member for Human Settlements, City of Cape Town