



**AT RISK:** Children are exposed to unhygienic and dangerous conditions in Masiphumelele.

Picture: ROSEMARY MILBANK

C.T. 4.3.16

## 'Many human rights abuses in Masi'

### Dominic Adriaanse

HUMAN rights violations have been witnessed in Masiphumelele, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) spokesperson Isaac Mangena said.

This comes after commission chairperson Lawrence Mushwana went on a week-long visit to various townships in the province.

Areas of concern included Khayelitsha, a Malmesbury farm and Masiphumelele, with long-standing complaints about water and sanitation, Mangena said.

"In Masiphumelele in particular, the commission witnessed human rights

abuses of concerning levels. We observed raw sewage flowing next to temporary shack dwellings where children and the elderly are exposed to extremely unhygienic and dangerous conditions."

He said Mushwana has engaged with the Masiphumelele community and its leaders, and walked the area to see some of these violations for himself.

"The community was also forcefully removed by the authorities on many occasions, at times without valid court orders. There is a process that we are working on, engaging the City and the province to see how we can resolve some of these issues

or even avoid them in future," said Mangena.

Masiphumelele community leader Tshepo Moletsane said there was continual demolishing of shacks.

"Shacks were demolished without proper court orders or alternative dwellings or space provided. The SAHRC has listened to our pleas and we will look to the courts for intervention," said Moletsane.

Provincial Department of Human Settlements spokesperson Muneera Allie said developing cities experienced an increasing growth of informal settlements as a result of urbanisation.

"In partnership with local authorities, the department is

working on the development of an Informal Settlement Support Plan which aims to address this issue. The Upgrade of Informal Settlement Programme is designed to address this.

"However, the province currently has a backlog of over 500 000 households requiring assistance. In the 2014-2015 financial year, and with available resources, the department delivered over 18 000 housing opportunities, exceeding its delivery target."

The department was committed to finding innovative ways of increasing the number of housing opportunities, she said.

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# Masi a neighbour, not a problem

Melanie Steyn, Simon's Town *F/Bany Echo*

*25.2.16*

I am concerned about the point of view the Echo takes for granted in its reporting. With the launch of initiatives aimed at ending racism, allow me to point out the bias.

In your front-page article on February 11 ("Masi students rise up"), you mention the threats and hostile behaviour from the students, but use no such emotive words about the frustrations of the students over decades.

You mention that they handed in a list of grievances at Fish Hoek and Cape Town, but there is no outrage that they are still asking for textbooks, for the textbook levy to be dropped, for extramural activities and for corporal punishment to end. Imagine the outcry if these needs were identified in a mainly white school.

The Western Cape Education Department commented that some students were "intent on disrupting schooling" and warned that, "every day of teaching lost will have a negative effect on their education". How ironic. The inferior conditions and facilities that the students have put up with for so long are what have a negative effect on their education.

There is no word of explanation for how the principal became so unpopular that he had to stay away from the school for a week. When he came back, he claimed that many grievances had been addressed. This is tantamount to an admission that they were valid. He is now offering to co-operate with an SRC. Why wasn't one put in place years ago?

There is a whole side to the story that is being ignored.

It is not just the school; Masi as a whole has much to be dissatisfied about. About 30% of the population of the far south is crammed into this area and instead of making it a priority to improve conditions and find more land, the City actually lied to leaders in Masi, saying that SANParks owned land which they had bought from them more than 10 years ago.

Fires have repeatedly shown us that the response is inadequate. Horst Kleinschmidt describes houses that have at last been provided to some of the victims: "On mounds of rubble, corrugated iron 3x3 metre structures, some without windows, and at best 1 metre apart are a boiling pot, in more than one sense.

"The City says this is temporary but with the same breath says it has no plan where else to provide space for them. Hundreds of other fire victims still have no place other than the hall or staying in overcrowded conditions with friends."

Let us look at both sides of the story: there is great injustice here. Why are new people being attracted to come and live in gated communities – for which land can be found – when established residents are being neglected? It would be wonderful to see a new spirit developing. For example, why is only the Masi community hall open to the victims? Where are the churches and the other community halls?

I believe that most of the citizens of the far south want to see these issues addressed in a more just and objective way than they have been until now. It's time to be more mindful and more proactive.

# Questions about lead story

F1 Bay Echo

Sara Dale-Lace, Fish Hoek

25-2-16

The story "Worry over wetlands" (False Bay Echo, February 18) refers.

What is the exact location and area that is referred to as the Sun Valley wetlands? Assuming we have a specific area of land to pinpoint, to whom does the land belong? Are the owners of the land not concerned about the alien vegetation, preservation of otters and leopard toads? If not, why not? Who has named this piece of land a 'wetland', and on whose authority? Why has the alien vegetation not been attended to, along with the alien blue gum trees?

There is an ominous and militant looking picture of an anti-land invasion unit attached to the article. Is this really necessary?

If a traumatic and sensitive event is about to take place, the community needs reassurance, not fear-mongering, (remembering that the community includes the people who are going to be evicted).

Furthermore, what was the plan to re-house the people who were finding shelter in the area once they were forcibly removed?

Were they provided with trauma counselling and social support services? If so, for how long and what services exactly? Are there any happy stories to share as an outcome of their relocation?

An unofficial group was allocated a front page voice in the newspaper which informs the entire local community. Furthermore, this group has complained about an increase in crime over the past year. Are there statistics to support this and do they stand up to critical analysis? Even though the writer does point out that the SAPS has no direct evidence to support this group's concern over crime, I propose that the mere association

of the "concern" about crime, in a front page article, is enough to impart feelings of fear and loathing in readers.

Supposing the evidence of increased crime is sound, is there any further evidence to support the implied link between the increase in crime and the residents of the eight dwellings in the area?

At what distance exactly are the dwellings in relation to the purported ecologically sensitive areas? (The photographs do not show the dwelling in relation to the attractive looking pool of water).

I would also like to know why the article uses legal-sounding language about the aim of the group: "they say they have one simple mandate"? This implies that they have been given the authority to take action. Other words that lend legal-sounding weight to the article such as: vigilance, investigation, trespassing, threat, illegal, law enforcement, laws and by-laws are threaded throughout the piece of writing.

Why does such a heavy-handed tone underlie this article? Preserving nature and helping people are positive actions that can inspire hope, joy and well-being.

## False Bay Echo responds:

Some of those whom we had approached for comment for last week's story had not been able to respond before the paper went to print, so a number of issues Ms Dale-Lace has raised, are addressed in our follow-up story in this edition.

On the issue of ownership of the land, last week's story made clear that it is City-owned land.

With regard to the "militant looking" picture of the Anti-Land Invasion Unit: this image merely reflects what the officers look like.

The aim of this story was, in nutshell, to raise the concerns pertinent to some of our readers who appeared to be taking a proactive approach to matters affecting their community.

We do, however, concede that police have not been able to positively link people living in the wetlands to criminal activity. As a community newspaper, we aim to present a wide array of perspectives and voices from the communities we serve, and always in a fair and balanced manner. With regard to language used in the story, we believe the writing style was formal (as is our usual style with news stories), rather than "legal-sounding".

See story on facing page.

# Masi is growing too fast, put up the fence

*People's Post 8.3.16.*

In reference to "Whose crazy idea was this fence" (*People's Post*, 1 March). Di Oliver, who resides in Marina da Gama, seems to have little idea of the expansion in Masi.

It was originally developed for the 5000 squatters living in Noordhoek some 20 years ago. Today there are in excess of 40 000 people living there. There is little

means to control this other than to stop them going to the reed beds where they have been heading over the past number of years.

Every week a new member arrives from wherever to stay with family or friends and hoping to find employment. They then establish a shack to live in (in an inhospitable part of the area) and

then complain about the conditions they are living in. They chose it, then make it the council's problem. At the rate this is happening they will cross the reed beds in no time. Some means have to be put in place to retard this or stop it. A fence is a start - however long it lasts.

**TONY FERNANDEZ**  
Email