



Camps: Judges deliberate

The Constitutional Court judges were locked in deliberations by midday on Friday over the rights of foreign nationals who fell victim to xenophobic violence in May.

The talks began at 11am and were still underway at 1pm. There was no indication when a ruling might be made.

The appeal to the court was brought by foreign nationals Odinga Mamba, Vasco Mitabele, Kiza Milinga Issa and Davidzo Aabidah Maduviko from the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa.

All of them had been granted refugee status or were documented asylum seekers, their attorney of record, Tasneem Bhamjee, noted in an affidavit to the court.

"(They) sought refuge in South Africa because they either face persecution in their countries of origin, or because their lives, safety or freedoms were threatened there," she stated.

They are challenging the Pretoria High Court's August 12 ruling that the government was not obliged to provide victims of xenophobia with temporary accommodation for more than ten months.

More than 60 people died, hundreds were injured, and nearly 20 000 displaced in a wave of xenophobic violence which started in Alexandra on May 12 and swept through the province and other parts of the country.

Six shelters, consisting of tent camps, were set up to house the displaced, who initially sought help at police stations and community centres.

On August 12, the Pretoria High Court held that plans to dismantle the shelters were not a violation of their rights. Nothing more could be expected of the government than what had already been done.

The foreign nationals are asking the Constitutional Court to order the government to publish a plan for reintegration of the victims of xenophobic violence within 30 days.

They are also asking the court to order the government to implement the plan within 60 days.

Pending the implementation of the plan, they want the dismantling of the shelters stopped, and those already taken down, restored.

Gauteng authorities began dismantling the shelters on Friday.

In a letter, forming part of the court documents, the office of the state attorney writes that the department of local government was "amenable" to keep the dismantling of the Glenanda shelter in Rifle Range Road in "abeyance" until the Constitutional Court application has been heard and that this decision would be communicated to people at the shelter. - Sapa

Published on the Web by IOL on 2008-08-15 14:27:01

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