



Gauteng denies early shelter breakdown

The Gauteng provincial government on Wednesday denied removing people ahead of deadline from the camps it set up for people who sought shelter from xenophobic attacks.

"There are no police removing anybody," said spokesperson Thabo Masebe in response to a report that police were forcibly removing people ahead of Friday's deadline for the closure of the camps.

He said that as tents became vacant they were folded up and packed away.

They had an "incident" on Tuesday where a family which had left, returned because their other accommodation wasn't suitable, but found that their tent had already been dismantled.

The provincial government hoped that by Friday the between three to four thousand people still at the six camps in the province would have left for other accommodation.

About 20 000 people in Gauteng sought refuge from attacks that singled out foreign nationals amid accusations that they caused crime and took jobs. Over 60 people were reported to have died.

The government believed it has created conditions for peoples' safe return to their communities.

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa and the Wits Law Clinic disagree and want the shelters to stay open pending the introduction of a proper reintegration plan.

Stuart Wilson, one of the legal representatives for the group and head of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits University said: "A few vague ad hoc actions in a few cases without an undertaking to provide specific relief for all the other people in the camps is not enough."

The government had to do research and come up with a plan.

They planned to file an urgent application at the Constitutional Court to keep the shelters open.

At least 200 men taken from the Glenanda shelter were arrested outside the Lindela repatriation centre outside Krugersdorp recently.

They had been taken to the centre because they didn't want to register at the camps, but were later released with the department of home affairs saying they were on their own.

They lived on the side of the road and were subsequently arrested on a traffic violation.

They spent a few days in police custody and were then returned to Lindela where,

according to the department, they were currently in the process of having their documentation verified.

Spokesperson Siobhan McCarthy said that some had fraudulent papers and some did not qualify for asylum status but they have the right to appeal the department's finding. - Sapa

Published on the Web by IOL on 2008-08-13 09:14:40

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