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## Refugees put their hope on Concourt

**By Beauregard Tromp**

The fate of nearly 3 000 victims of xenophobic violence sheltering in camps rests in the hands of the constitutional court which will decide if they are entitled to further enjoy the hospitality of the government.

Already much of the food aid has been cut off to the thousands displaced during xenophobic violence which erupted in May, quickly spreading throughout the country.

On Tuesday, the Pretoria High Court ruled the refugees' rights were not violated and the government was not obliged to provide temporary accommodation beyond the two months that it already had.

Families now sheltering in the Glenanda camp in Rifle Range Road, southern Johannesburg, and the five others dotted around Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni are either refugees or asylum seekers who face persecution in their home countries.

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, a network of refugee and migrant service providers, has now taken its appeal to the constitutional court in the hope that the dismantling of the camps - now under way - can be stopped.

The government is further accused of violating an agreement to suspend the dismantling of camps until the urgent application before the courts had been heard.

One of the respondents in the case, Glenanda camp manager Buks Burger, apparently told attorneys he would dismantle any tent not occupied.

"It furthermore is clear that even if a resident leaves his or her tent temporarily, if only for a few hours to seek employment or find food or alternative accommodation, their tent will be dismantled," argued the affidavit before the Constitutional Court.

Police entered Glenanda camp on Tuesday and started removing residents from their tents.

The action was halted later that day but not before a number of people - including women and children - were left on the pavement.

Police reportedly told residents they would return.

The government recently declared it safe for people displaced by the violence to return to their communities.

Lawyers from the Wits Law Clinic, acting on behalf of the refugees, argue that the South African government did nothing to prepare the road for reintegration of the displaced people back into the communities they were forced to flee.

"The threat of violence against the applicants and others in their position has not

dissipated," read papers before the court.

"There is no dispute between the parties that the shelters should remain a temporary solution and that reintegration is urgent."

The displaced people are asking to return to their homes without the threat of further xenophobic attacks and, if impossible, for alternative homes with psychosocial support, food, water, jobs and safety.

The group also wants a plan to be published which would provide "reasonable steps" for the state to provide housing, amenities and security for the displaced.

Lawyers for those at the Glenanda camp and elsewhere are asking that such a plan be published within 30 days and that it be implemented within 60 days after that.

Recent visits by The Star to the temporary shelters confirmed people had nothing to return to after their homes were destroyed and their meagre possessions looted.

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