

Time runs out for Gauteng refugee shelters

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The Gauteng provincial government believes it has done all it can to help reintegrate people displaced by xenophobic violence and will close all its shelters on Friday, supported by a court ruling.

"Really, they have been given enough time ... and it was extended for a few days," spokesman Thabo Masebe, pictured, said yesterday. "We think that was enough time to arrange alternative accommodation."

Earlier yesterday the Pretoria high court dismissed an urgent application to keep temporary refugee shelters open for a while.

Judge Ephraim Makgoba said the government was not violating any rights of the more than 4000 refugees being housed in temporary refugee shelters in Gauteng, and was under no obligation to come up with a reintegration plan.

The judge remarked that it was not as if the government had not been managing the disaster – which followed in the wake of widespread xenophobic attacks on foreigners – but said "it had to end somewhere".


The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) and the Wits Law Clinic launched the application on behalf of the province's refugees. They said the government could not simply leave these disenfranchised people to fend for themselves without coming up with a proper reintegration plan.

CoRMSA said it had approached the government on numerous occasions in an attempt to assist with such a plan, but was simply ignored.

Counsel for the applicants, Nadine Fourie, argued that the government had not acted in good faith since it had undertaken to reintegrate the refugees into society in a humane manner but now simply sat back and left it to them to sort out. – Sapa

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