



A security guard lies dead on the ground at the gate of the Sebokeng hostel. He was shot in a confrontation with residents resisting eviction

PHOTOGRAPH: TJ LEMON

Guard dies in shootout with hostel residents

BY CAROLINE HOOPER-BOX AND SAPA

Hostel residents at the KwaMasiza hostel in Sebokeng south of Johannesburg exchanged gunfire with security guards yesterday morning, leaving one guard dead and 10 injured. The shootings took place minutes after police escorted Bantu Holomisa, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) leader from the area. He had been addressing about

1 000 residents who are resisting efforts to evict them from the hostel.

Holomisa said he had spoken to the crowd after residents had requested his assistance. Evictions of between 1 000 and 2 000 people who had defaulted on rent began on Wednesday.

Security guards employed by Wozani security company said after Holomisa had left, the crowd toy-toyed towards a group of about 70

guards. They allegedly began to shoot at the guards, who fired back with rubber bullets and birdshot.

But Anti-Privatisation Forum members who attended the meeting said the security guards, known as "red ants", had opened fire with live ammunition without warning.

One resident sustained a foot injury and was placed under police guard at the Sebokeng hospital. Police are investigating charges of

murder and attempted murder.

The residents, mostly Iscor workers, were evicted from the hostel on Wednesday by Wozani guards and police after its new owners, Vicva Investments, obtained a court order. Holomisa said he would investigate how an ANC Emfuleni councillor got hold of R19 million to buy the hostel from Iscor, the former owners.

Vicva's eviction order was successfully challenged in court by the

residents in June, he said, and it had then agreed to settle out of court. Holomisa said he would demand an explanation as to why the matter had not been settled as agreed, and would request a forensic audit.

The forum has been assisting the residents in their resistance to privatisation of the hostel and their subsequent eviction. Residents say their rent has risen to R300 a month, which they cannot afford.