

The Kliptown Uprising

Compiled by APF Organiser – Silumko Radebe (khethokuhle@gmail.com) ; 072 173-7268 or 011 333-8334

Kliptown Mass meeting on the 21 July 2007

The community of Kliptown held a mass meeting at the Kliptown Community Centre to discuss the issue of service delivery in the area, with specific attention on housing development, electricity and water, sanitation infrastructure and crime. After a week of mobilisation in the area by the Anti Privatisation Forum (APF) and the Kliptown Crisis Committee (KCR) a meeting was held in the Community Center on 21st July to which both the police and ward council members were invited. Over 500 community members attended the meeting from all the informal settlement areas in Kliptown. At the meeting, community residents raised the issue of the 'development houses' in Kliptown and the current housing project taking place at the Pimville golf course. The meeting then decided to occupy the houses at the golf course as a symbolic move to highlight the lack of housing for those in the informal settlements. A resolution was taken that government officials, in particular Gauteng MEC for Housing, Nonyula Mokonyane, must come to meet with the community in order to provide an update of the developmental programmes in light of the fact that the government's 'Greater Kliptown Development Programme' has been a dismal failure. It was also decided that the community would embark on a public march to raise their grievances to government, as several attempts at dialogue had already failed.

Community March on the 22 July 2007

Another mass meeting was then held on Sunday 22nd July. The meeting decided that the march would be held the next day (Monday 23rd) and that a memorandum of demands be drafted to give to government officials. The hundreds of residents at the meeting then went around Kliptown to mobilise people for the Monday march. Soon, more than 1000 people had gathered and set off for the golf course houses. Once there, it was decided to hold an all-night vigil meeting at the community centre in preparation for the stay-away and march on Monday. It was made clear that the main demand from the community was service delivery and that no empty promises will be accepted anymore.

Road blockage and police violence on the 23 July 2007

At 02h00 in the early hours of the morning, hundreds of community residents went out to the streets under strict police guard who made sure that the community was aware of their visibility. The first incident where there was a clash with the police occurred around 02h30 next to the Kliptown train station when police opened fire on a group of women who were attempting to close the main road between Kliptown and Dlamini. More incidents followed when many more community members came out of their homes to barricade the roads. The SAPS and Metro police opened fire randomly, even targeting those who were not part of the gathering but who were on their way to work. At around 06h00 traffic and trains in the area were disrupted as residents vented their anger at the

police for denying them an opportunity to gather together in order to march to the housing department officials at the Kliptown Walter Sisulu Square. Police forces continued to shoot at residents indiscriminately for more than seven hours, resulting in sixty community members being injured from rubber bullets and stun grenades.

Fourteen residents were arrested during the uprising. Those who were arrested were Langa Alfredo, Cindi Cecilia, Sam Maluka, Rosemary Johnson, Busisiwe Dube, Jerome Masuku, Paul Malinga, Eric Kwinika, Morris Khosa, Phinda Vinjwa, Lawyer Khuzwayo and three juveniles whose identity can't be revealed for their protection. Two of these residents were locked up in the Kliptown Police Station with injuries and didn't receive any medical attention for their injuries. Some of the residents who were shot were denied the J88 form at the Kliptown police station so that they could be given a medical certificate at the public clinic because they couldn't afford to go to a private doctor. A local doctor who also treated some of the patients stated clearly that he couldn't issue out a medical certificate without the form in fear of losing his practising licence since he treated the people for free as he believed that they were fighting for real demands of housing development in the area.

As the APF, we demand an official inquest be convened into the violent conduct of the police which resulted in so many injuries. Not only is the government failing to deliver basic services for the poor of Kliptown but when residents exercise their constitutional right of protest, it is the very force that is supposed to protect and serve that always ends up engaging in wholly unnecessary and often brutal violence. Injury is added to insult.

Further police violence and memorandum to the housing department

In the midst of the uprising, a brief meeting was held with Kliptown Police Station Superintendent Baloyi and the Chief of Metro Police, Dan Machete, to discuss a resolution to the conflict. An agreement was concluded to allow community residents to gather at the Walter Sisulu Square where the memorandum would be delivered to housing officials. Residents then made their way to the square and waited for the housing officials. As the community was gathering and singing, the Metro Police & SAPS decided to open fire on the crowd, resulting in more injuries. This incident further angered residents who fought back. Eventually, at 12h00, City of Johannesburg Deputy Director of housing Thulani Ndaba arrived at the square and received the memorandum, promising to pass it on to Joburg Mayor, Amos Masondo. Later in the day, a meeting with community residents was initiated by the Mayoral housing committee at the Eldorado police station. A delegation from all the informal settlements in Kliptown was elected to meet with the housing officials.

Meeting with members of the Mayoral Housing Committee, Ward Councillors of Kliptown, SAPS and Johannesburg Metro Police Department @ Eldorado Police Station on the 23rd July 2007

The two main issues discussed at this meeting were the status of arrested residents/their bail application and the state of housing development in Kliptown. The Metro Police/SAPS indicated that other than the juveniles, all other arrested residents would appear in the Protea Magistrates court the following day. They also told the community

delegation that their gatherings were unlawful and this explained the excessive force used to disperse people. On the issue of housing, Mayoral Housing Committee head, Strike Ralekgoma, told the delegation that because Kliptown is overpopulated, people would need to relocate to a nearby transit camp (Lehae) first before houses could be developed in their area and that people willing to leave Kliptown must indicate their intention to do so. He said that he had heard rumours that the community are planning to illegally occupy the houses at the Pimville golf course, but that there was no basis for doing this since the houses belong to the people of Kliptown and that an office will be opened at the golf course to deal with applications, with preference being given to Kliptown & Pimville residents who qualify. When questioned by community delegates as to exactly what was meant by 'those who qualify', Ralekgoma did not provide an answer. However, he had no problem issuing a threat to the community delegates that anyone occupying the golf course houses would be shot by SAPS/Metro Police. At this point the community delegation told the government officials and police that Kliptown residents are no longer willing to listen to empty promises and that they expect a report-back to the community on concrete plans for housing and basic service delivery.

Case of the Kliptown 14 on 24th July at Protea Magistrates Court

The 14 arrested residents made their first appearance at the Protea Magistrate Court on charges of public violence and were granted bail of R300.00 each, which the APF paid. The case was postponed to the 31 July 2007 for 'further investigation'. Despite difficulties, the APF managed to secure legal representation for those arrested and will support the defence of the comrades throughout the judicial process.

ANC mass meeting on the 27 July 2007

In a clear effort to counter the organisational success of the APF and KCR in Kliptown and regain lost political ground, the ANC Kliptown Branch held a mass meeting on 27th July at the Kliptown Community Centre to discuss the issue of housing. The meeting was attended by less than 150 people. However, the ANC officials at the meeting had very little to say about housing issues and spent most of their time trying to discredit the APF. In response, the community members present made it clear that the ANC has failed the people in regards to service delivery as they prefer to give land to the business sector rather than building houses for the people. Many who spoke made it clear that the ANC was no longer a party for the people, that they have had enough empty promises and that the ANC Kliptown Branch must tell the Housing Department to immediately identify land where housing development can take place. The efforts of the ANC to discredit the APF did not go down well with those in attendance, with many indicating that it was the APF which was giving support to the fight for their housing and service delivery rights and that rolling mass action was the only thing that forces the ANC and government to listen to their plight. The meeting ended without any collective agreement on the community's demands.

KCR report back meeting on 28 July 2007

More than 1000 people attended the report back meeting in Kliptown, held under the auspices of the KCR and the APF. KCR/APF representatives gave a report on the status of the arrested and injured comrades as well as what had transpired at the initial meeting

with government officials and the police on 23rd July. Mayoral Housing Committee head, Strike Ralekgoma gave a romantic speech about the ANC's love for the people of Kliptown and how he had built ANC branches in Kliptown during the struggle against apartheid. He went on to say that Kliptown residents should not be confused and misled by the APF to engage in "violent, meaningless protests" for service delivery. These words angered community residents and the meeting demanded that Ralekgoma address the issue of houses. Residents indicated that they wanted a progress report and a concrete outline of plans (with timeframes) for housing development. Another chance was given to Ralekgoma to address the meeting, but he further embarrassed and contradicted himself. Now, according to Ralekgoma, housing projects in Slovoville, Doornkop and Lehale are available for Kliptown residents who want to be relocated, supposedly so that the housing department can fast-track the process of housing development in Kliptown itself. He again assured the community that Pimville golf course houses belong to the people of Kliptown and promised that they will be completed by October 2007. The meeting demanded For Ralekgoma to put this in writing at the Police Station by writing a sworn affidavit that the houses will be given to the people of Kliptown. When he failed to commit himself to the statement he made, it became clear to the meeting that the only solution was to embark on rolling mass action. A resolution was then taken to stage a march on Sunday 29th July in order to give an ultimatum to the housing department that Kliptown residents will occupy the golf course houses unless satisfactory, concrete housing development plans (with timeframes) are provided within a week. It was also resolved that the Provincial ANC Chief whip must receive a petition from the community about their ward councillors who have failed to serve them.

Mass march on Sunday 29 July 2007

Between 1000-1500 people peacefully took to the streets demanding houses. They gathered at the historic Walter Sisulu Square where the Freedom Charter was signed in 1955 and waited for government officials to come receive their memorandum. The residents waited for more than five hours with no response from the housing officials. It was decided that the Kliptown community would stage another march to the Eldorado Municipality office on Saturday 11 August 2007. Residents then dispersed.

Case of the Kliptown on 31 July 2007: Charges are dropped

The Kliptown 14 appeared for the second time in the Protea Magistrate's Court on Tuesday 31st July. No argument was put forward by the state prosecutor and all charges were dropped – another clear indication of the complete lack of evidence that these comrades or any other Kliptown residents had engaged in 'public violence'.

**VIVA THE KLIPTOWN UPRISING!
FORWARD TO HOUSING FOR ALL!
THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!**