



14 March 2021

Update - SAPS watch while illegal occupiers hijack building in Brooklyn

On Friday 12 March 2021 Communicare staff, security guards and tenants battled from 9pm to the early hours of Saturday morning to prevent lawful tenants from being assaulted and to secure their property from illegal occupation. All while SAPS from Maitland, Cape Town and Milnerton stood by and watched the violence unfolding without taking any action to stop the illegal activity.

Communicare has experienced attempts to illegally occupy its units at Goedehoep Rental Complex in Brooklyn since 2 March. At the time the illegal occupations were reported to Maitland Police who refused to take any action to protect property and legal tenants.

SAPS failure to act has now resulted in escalating violence and 24 apartments in the complex being occupied by the trespassers. Several violent scuffles broke out between a group of about 40 people led by 2 tenants from another of Communicare's properties. Tenants are generally law-abiding and Communicare will not tolerate tenants and others breaking the law.

Security guards were attacked with bottles. Bins were burnt, doors to tenants' apartments were broken and cars were damaged by the crowd who were intent to violently occupy the vacant units. Members of the crowd threatened some tenants and said they would return to burn down the units and set tenants alight. SAPS stood by and watched all this unfold and refused to take any action despite pleas from tenants and Communicare.

In one incident SAPS instructed a security guard to allow the illegal occupiers to move into the vacant units.

SAPS claims that Communicare must apply to the courts under the Prevention of Illegal Eviction (PIE) Act. However, the people who were trespassing are not tenants or occupants being removed, they were storming the properties in the presence of SAPS and terrorising our tenants. The Communicare security guards attempted to prevent the trespassers from resorting to violence to enter the property however SAPS refused to intervene.

The failure of police to protect property and legal tenants, especially the elderly and vulnerable will be brought to the attention of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate and the Provincial Police Commissioner.

Communicare's lawful tenants residing at Goedehoep Rental Complex are extremely traumatised and fearful of their safety. Some of the tenants are older and vulnerable.

"The situation is untenable. No-one should be threatened or feel unsafe in their homes. It is a sad day when the police who are expected to protect us do not enforce the law and protect our tenants and property, particularly when the violence unfolds in front of them. Communicare is now resorting to using private

security to safeguard our property and our tenants. The failure of SAPS resulted in these criminals taking the law into their own hands and threatening our tenants. We have seen hijacking of buildings in Gauteng. There is no end when you allow this to happen without any consequences,” said Anthea Houston, CEO Communicare.

“Our first priority is to our tenants, especially the elderly. We owe them the right to live securely and peacefully in our rental units,” said Houston.