

Building hijacking foiled at Communicare property in Bothasig after swift action

6 June 2021

Late Friday night, 5 June 2021 Communicare received reports from tenants that the security guards at our Bothasig Gardens residential complex were being held at gunpoint while a mob of about 50 building hijackers stormed a block of apartments.

The apartment Block is brand new, part of Communicare's social housing development in which 314 new apartments are being built. The Block in question is nearly completed with new tenants expected to move in during June and July as the apartments are completed.

SAPS were called after the mob descended on the complex at about 9 pm on Saturday, 5 June 2021. The guards were held hostage in the security huts, they were robbed of their phones and radios. Doors to 17 units were damaged in an attempt to gain access to the units. This may delay their handover to the low-income families who were looking forward to moving in before the end of winter.

Swift action by SAPS, the neighbourhood watch and the vigilance of our tenants in Bothasig resulted in 28 arrests. Communicare can confirm that 25 people were charged with housebreaking and will appear in court tomorrow, 7 June 2021. The police are still investigating the allegations of assault.

The attempted hijacking follows a High Court order on 24 May 2021 to evict 40 people who, on about 2 March 2021, had violently overruled the security guards at the Goedehoop residential complex in Brooklyn. The Court ordered that the hijackers be immediately evicted from the premises where they have already been living illegally, rent-free for 3 months.

The mob that attempted hijacking the units in Bothasig Gardens adopted the same *modus operandi* as those in Brooklyn. This points to an organised crime syndicate that are mobilising to hijack and vandalise buildings while intimidating tenants.

Similar attempts were made in the last few weeks at other Communicare property in Brooklyn and Ruyterwacht which SAPS managed to stop.

"The organised nature and frequency of these invasions are of extreme concern to Communicare and our lawful tenants. We cannot sustain our operations and invest in social housing if such criminal behaviour continues. Immediate cooperation and further action is needed from law enforcement and the City of Cape Town to put a permanent stop to these invasions," said Anthea Houston CEO of Communicare.

Communicare has invested R44.5 million, government provided R85.3 m in grants through the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA) while R33 m was raised as a loan to finance the development at Bothasig Gardens. All the units are aimed at families with combined incomes between R5 500 and R15 000 per month. The building hijackings severely threaten future investment in social housing and in rental in the City.

It has taken Communicare three months to evict illegal invaders on an urgent basis through the courts. This syndicate understands the law. They manipulate the legal system while they stay rent-free themselves, or collect money from people desperate to access housing. The only way to stop the action is by the quick response from law enforcement.

“I must commend the SAPS, the neighbourhood watch in Bothasig Gardens, our tenants and staff who worked together to stop the illegal invasion. Their swift action helped to protect our tenants” said Houston.

“I want to assure our lawful tenants that their safety and well being is our first priority. I will do everything I can to protect your families from the criminals who threaten your safety. I will not allow this to happen to decent, law-abiding tenants who pay their rent every month” said Houston.

End

Note: A recording of the 30 minute media briefing is available. Please send an email to Neeran@Hewers.co.za for a link.

For media queries contact

Neeran Naidoo, Hewers

Neeran@Hewers.co.za

Tel: 0832582102