

SA: Walk of witness replaces violent protest in Khayelitsha

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Khayelitsha township in the Cape Flats
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From [The Mail & Guardian](#)

A small miracle has happened in Cape Town. Instead of violent protests, religious leaders including Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, civil society and a forum representing protesters on Thursday explored the root of the discontent and staged a "Walk of Witness" in [Khayelitsha](#).

This first "Walk of Witness" was the result of a mediated attempt by interested groups to come together to help resolve the plight of residents in townships and informal settlements in a peaceful way, said Elizabeth Petersen, the interim director of the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum.

"The religious leaders and others are looking at the conditions that sparked the protests," said Petersen. "After our consultation with the protester's forum, the religious leaders want to see what the circumstances are. They just want to listen and see it for themselves."

Makgoba was part of a group of 86 signatories – consisting of prominent South Africans and former anti-apartheid activists including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu – which recently wrote a public statement condemning activists saying they want to make the Western Cape ungovernable.

Control

"Making areas of South Africa ungovernable was a tactic of the African National Congress [ANC] and its allies during the struggle against the racist apartheid system in the 1980s," the group of 86 wrote in the open letter. "The ANC runs the national government of South Africa and has control of eight of the country's nine provinces, but it does not control the Western Cape, which is in the hands of the Democratic Alliance. We call on the religious communities as well as politicians of all parties to call on the activists engaged in this destabilisation project to cease and desist and return to the values that this country is supposed to uphold."

While the open letter caused a stir, and some bitterness from the protesters, there appeared to be a stalemate on all fronts. An illegal march on the city last week was called off on Thursday night by its organisers after the City of Cape Town was granted an urgent interdict to prevent the protest from taking place.

To read the rest visit <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-12-05-walk-of-witness-to-replace-violent-protest-in-khayelitsha>

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