

City marchers give Zille 2-month deadline

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DEFIANT: Andile Lili at the Informal Dwellers Association press conference. On his right is Ncediwua Mabala. Photo: Courtney Africa

Cobus Coetzee and Siyavuya Mzantsi

INFORMAL settlements leaders have given Premier Helen Zille a two-month ultimatum to respond to their demands, while religious leaders try to mediate.

Cape Town Informal Settlements Leaders Andile Lili and Loyiso Nkohla said yesterday they had put all marches on Zille's office on hold pending talks initiated by the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum.

Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba initiated talks after threats of an illegal march last week ended in a court battle.

The Western Cape High Court granted an eleventh-hour interdict to stop a prohibited march from going ahead on Friday, while the City of Cape Town revoked permission for another planned march yesterday.

Nkohla said they met Makgoba and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu on Friday.

“As a result of these discussions, the communities agreed to a plan of constructive engagement involving religious leaders and the government,” he said.

He warned if these talks failed, residents would march to Zille's office in February.

Makgoba's intervention follows a hard-hitting statement signed by Makgoba, Tutu and 84 other prominent Capetonians, most of them religious leaders. The group slammed attempts by “a group of political activists” to “promote a climate of hate”

and destabilise the province through violent protests but also called on the authorities to make changes in favour of the poor.

Makgoba's chief-of-staff Godfrey Walton said the discussions between Makgoba and the group were preliminary and he would only comment after he had met all those concerned.

Lili said they were hoping the religious leaders would be able to help. The organisation planned to hold walkabouts with religious leaders this week. He said they would not talk to Zille directly but would forward a concise list of demands to her by Thursday.

Lili said if the provincial government was unwilling to listen, the organisation would adopt a "last resort of radical protest action". This included a march to the city, blocking the N2 and building informal settlements on any vacant land.

But there would be no looting or damage to property.

He said it was unfair to see the organisation as hooligans, anarchist and violent, despite a splinter group that damaged stalls and shops during a march on October 30.

Lili said the group had not abandoned the protests. The group had no political affiliation.

Zille was unaware yesterday of any talks headed by religious leaders.

"What needs to be mediated? There is a standard practice for mediation: Parties that have reached deadlock in a negotiation then agree on mediation and then bring in appropriate people. There have been no deadlocks in any negotiations as far as I know," she said.

Zille said Human Settlements MEC Bonginkosi Madikizela had met Lili's group last week.

"He has given them all the information that they wanted. They gave MEC Madikizela names of people who demand houses. Minister Madikizela's department is checking to see whether their names appear on the housing waiting list.",

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<http://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/city-marchers-give-zille-2-month-deadline-1.1615873#.VCE8yRacxfg>