

‘Sanitation issues need to be solved’

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inlsa PILE OF EVIDENCE: Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba walks past a rubbish heap in Khayelitsha during a walkabout with community and religious leaders. Behind him are Loyiso Nkohla, Arthur Kose, Unathi Mabengwana and Godfrey Photo: Brenton Geach

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PORTA POTTI toilets are an improvement – but not a final solution for the sanitation problems in Cape Town’s informal settlements, says Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba.

He said this after he led a walkabout of religious leaders and concerned residents around informal settlements in Khayelitsha yesterday.

It came about after a meeting in Bishopscourt on Wednesday between the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum, the so-called “poo protesters” Andile Lili and Loyiso Nkohla from Ses’khona and representatives of the 86 signatories of the Call for Action.

Yesterday they visited Site C’s informal settlements and were shown how people had to deal with poor sanitation, pollution, rats and flooding in the winter.

“(Portable toilets) cannot be the answer in the long term. I’m sure we can do better,” Makgoba said.

He and others will meet Premier Helen Zille and Cape Town mayor Patricia de Lille today.

The 86 signatories, include Makgoba and Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who issued a hard-hitting statement last week slamming “a group of political activists” who wanted to “promote a climate of hate” and destabilise the province through violent protests.

They warned that if what they termed a concerted campaign to destabilise the Western Cape was not stopped, it could spread across the country. But they also called on the authorities to make changes in favour of the poor.

Yesterday, Makgoba said he grew up with the bucket system in Alexandra township, in Johannesburg, and a Porta Potti was a step in the right direction.

A group of community members handed Nkohla, dressed in a grey suit and pink shirt, a Porta Potti which he put down in the sand road to demonstrate how it works.

He had to lift up his suit jacket to squat down and show Makgoba and others how residents used the portable toilets.

Makgoba said the walkabout was not grandstanding. “It is an act of faith that says God’s people are living in appalling and dehumanising conditions. We as South Africans cannot be free as long as other sectors of our community live in such conditions.”

Makgoba talked to resident Noziphiwe Poni who told him she and her family couldn’t leave food at home because the rats would eat it all. She said in the winter the water from the nearby wetland would rise up to their houses.

Makgoba said their intervention were both an appeal and a challenge to the government to address the issues of sanitation and housing. “Let’s avert the war and hope that hope does triumph.”

One of the 86 signatories, Gordon Oliver said they didn’t expect miracles but wanted to see a commitment with plans they could monitor. “We don’t want to shun each other and close the door. “

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