

Officials' houses attacked

COUNCILLORS' HOUSES WERE TORCHED WHILE SUV AND OTHER CARS DAMAGED

ELFAS TORREAI

TWO houses and a vehicle belonging to councillors in Isoseng were damaged in overnight attacks orchestrated by angry residents on Wednesday night.

The houses were torched while a top of the range SUV and several other vehicles were damaged as anger flared in the restive township.

A house belonging to an official at Ditsobotla local municipality also had its windows shattered in the attack.

A resident who spoke on condition of anonymity said: "Things got pear-shaped after Isoseng residents barred children from Verduwaal village from attending school.

The motive was to retaliate against a move by Verduwaal residents to deny employment for Isoseng residents on a new road construction project in the area. "After their children were barred from school, Verduwaal residents marched into Isoseng and disrupted schools on Wednesday.

Tension continued to build between residents of the two villages and it remains unclear why the councillors' houses were *later targeted*.

Ditsobotla local municipality spokesperson Plus Batsile said that the local council was disappointed at the destruction of property.

"We want to categorically condemn the arson and other forms of damage to property.

The municipality calls on residents to exercise restraint and use the proper channels to vent their frustrations," he said.

Others who spoke yesterday argued that the issue was no longer about the road works in Verduwaal but a political game targeting certain individuals.

The situation remained tense for the

better part of yesterday and it was not clear if further attacks were on the way. North West police commissioner, Lt-Gen Balle Motswenyane also weighed in, calling for an end to the violence.

"Lawlessness has no place in our society. No matter how long it takes, we will ensure that the long arm of the law catches up with those who take advantage of community protests to commit crime and destroy properties," she said.

The Isoseng violent protests mirrored a number of similar protests that have plagued the North West since the beginning of January. Violence marred community protests have been taking place in the province since the beginning of this month.

Residents of Dinokana village near Zeerust barricaded the N4 linking the province with Botswana demanding that the Ramotshere Moiloa local municipality supplies them with water on Wednesday and yesterday.

In Ottoshoop, members of the community barricaded the R49 road between Mahikeng and Zeerust. They burnt a local post office and attacked the police station with stones. They were complaining about municipal related services.

Several houses and vehicles continue to be burnt in Rustenburg as residents say they are ridding the Platinum City of drug dealers and brother's Motswenyane said that some of the actions by public border on criminality and should never be allowed to continue.

"It is important that all available legal possibilities are followed and exhausted to express any dissatisfaction rather than resorting to violence," she said.

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UP IN SMOKE: Angry Isoseng residents attacked a councillor's house as fresh protests erupted in the area.

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House, car torched in jobs riot

Battle lines drawn in township protest

By **Boitumelo Tshehe**
North West Correspondent

Protesting residents of Itsoseng township in North West have vowed to fight anyone who blocks development in the area.

The angry residents said they would do anything, even blocking pupils from going to school, as they went on a rampage torching cars and burning houses on Wednesday.

Schools were forced to shut down for the second day in a row as protesting parents blocked children from the neighbouring community of Verdtwaal from attending classes as they demanded to be given jobs from an upcoming construction project in

the area. The road project was supposed to be in Verdtwaal.

"Why must we care about Verdtwaal children whereas they do not want our children to be empowered?" Itsoseng resident and community leader Pule Dula said.

Dula, who said he failed metric and could not go back to school because of the challenges he was facing, said: "I could not go back to school but it's not a problem because even our president is not educated."

He, however, wants his daughter to be educated.

"I have a daughter whom I want to see educated. I want her to face life without feeling intimidated.

"Right now, all we want is to have equal benefits from the projects; we do not care about schools or education."

Dula said they had warned education department officials and the police that



Children look at a house and car belonging to Molefe Morutse, one of the local councillors in Itsoseng township, which were burned by protesting residents. / TIRO RAMATLHATSE

schools would be disturbed if their demands were not met.

"I love children and I often tell them to go to school when I see them on the streets but, as parents, we must work so we can provide food and pay school fees for these children," he said.

Most of the residents in Itsoseng are unemployed.

However, Verdtwaal residents said they would not let an already developed It-

soseng take over their project. "This project falls under ward 8, it's ours and they are not going to benefit," said Setlo Maleke.

Maleke pleaded with Itsoseng residents to let their children attend classes. "Most of us here are very poor, education is the only thing that can save us," he said.

He said they refused to be intimidated by Itsoseng residents. "We will fight back,

and tomorrow we will forcefully take our children to school, we will be having our own weapons," Maleke said.

Yesterday, Ngaka Modiri Molema district municipality mayor Justice Makolomakwa was busy trying to give both communities an ear.

During the riots, a house and a car belonging to local councillor Molefe Morutse were set alight. Two of his other cars were stoned.

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Police warn about fraudsters across Bokone Bophirima

Obakeng Maje

Bokone Bophirima police have urged communities around the province to be wary of "too good to be true" promises. Provincial police spokesperson, Brigadier Sabata Mokgwabone, said police have recorded many cases of fraud this past festive season.

"We have experienced more incidents of fraud across the province. So it is important that continuous and proactive steps are taken to prevent such criminal activities. It has been noted that places such as Tlhabane, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom, Mmabatho, Mahikeng, Klerks-

corp, Brits and Hartbeespoort Dam are some of those areas where incidents of fraud were experienced.

"We have also realised that the incidents occurred particularly on weekends. It is apparent that suspects are becoming innovative. They create devices to read unsuspecting consumers' bank cards and defraud them. Among others, the suspects scam victims by pretending to be assisting them with withdrawals at Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)," Mokgwabone said.

He said in other cases consumers would receive calls requesting them to confirm their cellphone numbers or at least four digits thereof. Once that is done, the

victims would experience problems with their cellphones and be forced to switch them off.

"The victims would realise upon switching their cellphones on that their sim cards have been blocked. The suspects would then do a sim swap without the victim's consent and gain access to victims' bank accounts. So, as part of awareness, the police in the province would like urge members of the community to exercise caution about fraud when doing various transactions.

Members of the community are hereby advised to apply safety tips as part of preventative measures. We urge them to always be alert for people who lure them

with good to be true stories and products that are sold from the internet. They also need to be wary of people who volunteer to assist them at the ATMs," he said.

Mokgwabone said community members should not believe promises of easy money. They are also encouraged not to use repeated passwords for anything involving sensitive personal information.

"People need to avoid isolated ATMs at all cost and using them late at night. If you feel unsafe at an ATM or you are suspicious of individuals loitering in the vicinity of the ATM, trust your instincts, go away and use another ATM. They must also never accept help from strangers when using an ATM," he said.

operators blockading both the taxi and

of the scourge.

olence to air their concerns as this could

ipality.

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Illegal mining claims the lives of four men

Nthusang Lefafa

Police have warned communities in Bokone Bophirima to refrain from illegal mining after four men were found dead at an unused shaft at Bonanza Mine near Hartbeesfontein last week.

The incident was reported at Hartbeesfontein Police Station last Tuesday evening after a group of men went to the police to tell them that four men were laying unconscious underground.

Upon arrival at the scene, police found the bodies of four dead men, two Zimbabwean nationals and two Lesotho na-

tionals. Colonel Adele Myburgh from the Bokone Bophirima's South African Police Service's (SAPS) provincial office said police suspect that the men died from smoke inhalation because a petrol generator that was apparently used to pump out water at the closed mine shaft was found at the scene.

"A group of men came to the Hartbeesfontein Police Station to report that four men were trapped underground. Upon arrival, emergency services and police declared the men dead at the scene. There was a petrol generator that was also discovered at the scene and we suspect that the four men died from smoke inhalation because the generator

emits smoke that is dangerous in an enclosed space such as a mine shaft," Myburgh said.

She cautioned communities against illegal mining because in such an arrangement there are no safety measures put in place. Not only does one risk arrest, but there are toxic gases that one can inhale underground.

"We would like to urge our communities to refrain from activities such as illegal mining because it is life threatening. It poses a lot of health hazards as there are no safety officers and one stands the risk of inhaling poisonous gasses and tunnels collapsing underground," said Colonel Myburgh.

Police arrested a further five men at the scene for illegal mining and are still conducting investigations into what really happened that caused the deaths of the four men.

Last year, a 62-year-old man was sentenced to one year in prison for illegal mining and the unlawful possession of unpolished diamonds in the Schweizer-Reneke District Court.

He was given the option of paying a R50 000 fine as an alternative to jail when he appeared in court. The Hawks arrested the man following a tip-off about illegal mining on a cattle farm called Eerste Begin in the small town of Amalia near Vryburg.

Call to sack all the bad apples in SAPS

SIYABONGA MKHWANAZI

PARLIAMENT wants a clean-up in the police, with the portfolio committee demanding the removal of 1 448 officers with criminal records.

The chairperson of the portfolio committee on police, François Beukman, said yesterday they want all the corrupt officers kicked out of the SAPS.

Beukman said it was vital that members of the police service were above reproach and with no criminal records, in order to instil confidence in the public.

The issue of the 1 448 corrupt police officers has been dragging on for several years.

It first came up in 2013 when then police minister Nathi Mthethwa ordered an audit of the police.

The audit uncovered that a shocking 1 448 officers had been found guilty of serious crimes including murder, rape, theft, assault, corruption and attempted murder. Most of those officers were found guilty after they had joined.

At least 64 officers were from police headquarters in Pretoria.

In the list presented in Parliament, 716 were warrant officers; 267 were sergeants; 129 constables; 21 colonels; 10 majors; 84 lieutenants; 43 lieutenant-colonels; 10 brigadiers; two personnel officers; and a major-general.

Beukman said they were

now waiting for another audit from the police on February 1, when they are set to appear before Parliament.

He said that when the chief operations officer, Lieutenant-General Bonang Mgwenya, briefed them in October last year, she said that of the 1 448 officers, 226 had since retired.

Beukman said they would get the latest feedback at the meeting.

This followed the unions's decision to challenge the rogue officers' dismissal in court.

After the audit was released, the police fired the officers, but a legal battle has now ensued.

The court has ruled in favour of the officers, saying the fitness boards had not been properly constituted and should be scrapped.

The police in turn have appealed the decision in court.

But Beukman insisted that they wanted all the rogue cops out. He said that when they meet the top brass of the police on February 1, they will raise the matter with them.

"The impression I got from the national commissioner Lieutenant-General Khehla Sitole is to clean up the SAPS.

"It is crucial that the SAPS deals with this issue to instil confidence. Members of the police service must be above board and there must be no criminal elements," said Beukman.

They don't want bad apples in the police service, he added.

* Bid to rid SAPS of 1 448 dirty cops

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He added that they did not need bad apples in the police at this time.

The latest audit from the police will be able to tell them how many officers had criminal records including those who were dismissed but whose matters were still pending in court.

He said the matter cannot be avoided as they wanted a clean police. "When we meet the police on February 1, we will again raise those issues," said Beukman.

Parliament has been raising the issue since it came up five years ago and Mthethwa had acted at the time.

Beukman said they wanted the matter to be finalised speedily as they wanted a clean SAPS.

The police has been unstable at the top for some time now with national commissioners embroiled in controversy leading to their dismissals.

Since 2009 the police has had six acting and permanent national commissioners. The crime intelligence unit has had 12 acting heads in the past six years following the suspension of then head Richard Mdluli, who was removed this week.