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Ndifuna Ukwazi Press Statement: Public Land Needs Public Scrutiny

Ndifuna Ukwazi assists and represents Reclaim the City – a social movement of working class people, students, tenants and young professionals across Cape Town.

The movement's members are concerned with the lack of affordable housing near the city centre as well as rising rents and property prices which entrench the spatial apartheid that Cape Town inherited.

The most vulnerable members of the movement are domestic workers, security guards and gardeners who face eviction, insecurity of tenure and high rent. They live in sub-standard conditions – in basements and storage units and they are routinely abused by landlords and body corporates in neighbourhoods such as Sea Point.

Over the last twenty years, Sea Point workers have been promised access to sites such as the Tafelberg Remedial School. The Province has an obligation to use suitable public land for affordable housing – no other competing interest can take precedence. This is especially so in well-located areas.

Sea Point is an ideal neighbourhood to show leadership in ending apartheid spatial planning. The Tafelberg site should have been developed for affordable, mixed-income housing – instead it was declared “surplus” and sold with no strings attached. We hold that this was unlawful.

The problem is that the Province has made this decision behind closed doors. When it comes to public land, the Province needs to be open, transparent and accountable in all its decisions – it is the only way to avoid undue influence by corporate and wealthy interests.

Reclaim the City's supporters have asked repeatedly: How could the Tafelberg Site have been declared “surplus” in light of the land, housing and segregation crisis in Cape Town? How could the Tafelberg site have been sold with no conditions?

We demand that the transfer of the Tafelberg be stopped, all documentation relating to the sale be made public, and the future use of the site meet the needs of poor and working class people.

For comment:

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