

PRESS RELEASE

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## COMMUNITIES FIGHTING FOR ACCESS TO LAND & AFFORDABLE HOUSING DISRUPT AFFORDABLE HOUSING INDABA TO HIGHLIGHT THEIR EXCLUSION



*A delegate at the City of Cape Town's Affordable Housing Indaba inside the Cape Town International Convention Centre takes a photo of a group of almost 500 land and housing rights activists protesting outside (Photo by Ashraf Hendricks for Ground Up).*

Today, the City of Cape Town's Affordable Housing Indaba was disrupted by over 500 land and housing rights activists from across Cape Town asking for a greater say in the deliberations about the release of public land and development of affordable housing. Communities gathered early in the morning to protest outside the Cape Town International Convention Centre and call for the politicians present - including Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis, Western Cape Premier Alan Winde and National Minister for Human Settlements Mmamoloko Kubayi - to address them directly.

While the City of Cape Town Mayoral Committee Member for Human Settlements Malusi Booi and Minister Kubayi went out to address the protesting communities, and invited a small number of community leaders inside, both Mayor Hill-Lewis and Premier Winde chose to ignore the requests for engagement.

As Ndifuna Ukwazi we were granted access to the Affordable Housing Indaba, but as a resourced support organisation we cannot speak for those most directly affected by the state's failure to address Cape Town's affordable housing crisis. Communities and social movements like Reclaim the City have vocally called for the release of well-located public land and development of dignified, affordable housing for years, yet they were not drawn into the event.

The fundamental call from communities was for greater inclusion in the decision-making processes around the release of land and development of affordable housing. Though a wide range of roleplayers were present (including private property developers, social housing institutions (SHIs) and micro-developers), those who have the greatest possible stake in seeing affordable housing developed were not included. In solidarity, during Mayor Hill-Lewis and Premier Winde's keynote addresses, Ndifuna Ukwazi unfurled banners stating "You are needed at the People's Housing Indaba Outside" and asking key questions of concern to those not in the room, namely: "Which land, where?", "What is affordable?", and "Why criminalise, when you could collaborate?"



*Delegates from Ndifuna Ukwazi hold up signs during Mayor Hill-Lewis, Premier Winde and Minister Kubayi's addresses (Photo by Ashraf Hendricks for Ground Up).*

These are questions that can ensure accountability for any public-private partnership concerning the development of affordable housing. The protest and people's housing indaba was a peaceful one, and merely requested that the Minister Kubayi, Premier Winde and Mayor Hill-Lewis engage with the people around their plans for housing. As NU, we welcome the commitment to release public land for affordable housing and appreciate that the delivery mechanisms for affordable housing are important. However, we find the emphasis on the private sector and associated incentives deeply troubling. For years, we have argued that the cost of well-located land is a key barrier to affordable housing delivery, and that the state should embrace its power to release public land it already owns or more tightly regulate the use of land to ensure greater delivery. In response to consistent advocacy from social movements and civil society, the City in 2017 announced plans to release eleven pieces of public land in Woodstock, Salt River and inner-city Cape Town to the private sector and SHIs for the development of social and transitional housing. However, five years after these commitments, none of the sites have been released despite readiness from both SHIs and private developers. Yet today, somehow, there is an urgency to release land to the private sector.

While the event was open for public registration, targeted invitations carefully ensured that the private sector, SHIs, and certain civil society groupings were present, while apparently making no attempt to draw in those most affected. The only interaction that communities have on housing matters is through written strategy documents or through law enforcement officers using municipal by-laws like the controversial Unlawful Occupation By-Law and Streets, Public Places and Noise Nuisances By-Law to harass, intimidate and forcefully displace them..

The communities have made their demands clear, peacefully: "Nothing about us, without us."

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**ENDS**