



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Member of the Mayoral Committee

Councillor Anthea Natasha Leitch
MMC for Human Settlements

Media Statement

For Immediate Release

11 September 2023

MMC Leitch's oversight visit to four hijacked buildings highlights ongoing concerns

The Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Human Settlements in the City of Johannesburg, Cllr Anthea Leitch, and her Public Safety colleague, Cllr Mgcini Tshwaku, conducted an oversight visit on Saturday to four buildings in the inner city.

This visit yet again revealed significant issues that demand immediate attention.

Florence Nightingale, one of the buildings visited, houses a crèche that caters to 92 children. There is a pressing need to involve Social Development and other relevant entities to assess the conditions in which these children are living as there is currently no electricity, the stench and filth pose a health hazard, manholes within the building are covered by unsecured boards and a mishap could prove fatal for the children.

Casa Mia, which is owned by Joshco, has fallen victim to illegal occupation and hijacking. Joshco's plans to renovate the building were thwarted by budget constraints caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, opening the door to illegal occupation.

It has been identified as a hub for criminal activities, and tenants are urged to come forward with information that could aid in addressing these issues. It is essential for those who can afford alternative housing options to vacate the premises, thereby facilitating much-needed restoration.

The situation at Tygerberg is also one of grave concern that requires further investigation as yet again rent is being paid, but no municipal bills. There is a case of fraud, corruption and money laundering currently pending with the Hawks and the accused is said to have incurred around R20 million thus far from managing buildings in the City.

On arrival at Greenhouse, we found a sealed-up spray paint workshop. Vehicles were being sprayed but there was little ventilation. We also found a shoe factory in one of the rooms. The rooms are not big enough to accommodate a family of five, but currently accommodate up to six families in one room, separated only by curtains. Occupants were unable to provide accurate rental information, and the building primarily houses foreigners.

Call for Collaborative Action

We implore all spheres of government to join hands in restoring both the state of these buildings and the living conditions of their inhabitants. Non-governmental organisations advocating for the



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human rights of those illegally occupying these buildings are encouraged to consider the severe infringement on human rights endured by these residents.

Safety concerns, including fire hazards and health risks, are prevalent, and it is crucial that the media aids in raising awareness without inadvertently promoting or legitimising illegal activities. We are committed to preventing a recurrence of the tragic events that occurred at 80 Albert Street. As we visit these buildings, we are confronted with the high probability of more fires breaking out.

This week, a meeting involving the city manager, executive mayor and relevant MMCs will convene to finalise a list of buildings where immediate action will commence.

End

Media Enquiries

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