

Increase in violent evictions

'Bad housing policy' blamed

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THE alleged rise in the use of violence by the city's land invasion unit during informal settlement evictions is because of eThekweni Municipality's "bad housing policy".

This was the opinion of Mary de Haas of the KZN Violence Monitor after shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo's march to the city hall yesterday against the rise in violent evictions.

Police officers formed a human barricade preventing angry shack dwellers from storming the city hall because eThekweni mayor Zandile Gumede was not available to collect a memorandum from the movement.

Hundreds of people from informal settlements around Durban marched from Curries Fountain Stadium in protest against the rise in violent evictions.

Memorandums were handed to representatives of both the mayor and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube.

Thapelo Mohapi, Abahlali general secretary, said in recent cases of evictions, police and officers from the city's land invasion unit had attacked residents violently.

"We are at war with a municipality and government that does not care about its people. We want to show them where the power lies and that is with the people," Mohapi said.

On June 13, Samuel Hloele was killed after an apparent armed eviction in eMasenseni, near Mariannhill.

The organisation claimed that since Hloele's death, il-



Shack dwellers held a mass march to the city hall to hand over a memorandum to eThekweni mayor, councillor Zandile Gumede, yesterday.

PICTURE: NIAMH WALSH-VORSTER

legal evictions had continued to be carried out at gunpoint.

Last month, a group of shack dwellers marched to the Sydenham police station with the body of baby Jayden Khoza, who died after an eviction at an informal settlement in Clare Estate.

According to his parents, the infant had been inside their dwelling when police released teargas into the settlement.

However, a post mortem ordered by the Independent Police Investigative Directorate revealed the baby had died of natural causes.

In the march yesterday, members of Abahlali refused to hand the memorandum to anyone else from the mayor's office. Instead they demanded Gumede collect the document herself.

"Outlined in the memorandum are the grievances expressed by our members. They have written their complaints themselves," said Mohapi.

De Haas said the claims of violent force being used during

evictions were concerning.

"There is no excuse for violence. This is all a symptom of the city's bad housing policy. Residents living in Kennedy Road and Cato Crest informal settlements have lived there for 20 years."

De Haas said people were interviewed by social workers who made their recommendations to councillors.

"There are over 5 000 people on the waiting list and people wait for years, while there are those who just get houses. So those who have been waiting get upset."

De Haas said there was also a flip side to the issue of illegal occupation and forceful evictions.

"You find that there are shack lords who know there is money to be made from renting out shacks. So as much as there are evictions, there is the issue of illegal land invasions. Police need to act against the law breakers. Having said this, you cannot use gratuitous violence. There has to be a balance," she said.