

Community at the end of its tether

RUSTENBURG - The authorities seem to have received a wake-up call after the events of Friday last week, when a large group of angry people descended on the area in Leyds Street notorious for prostitution and drug peddling. The drama started when a group of around 100 members of the Rustenburg Taxi Association took matters into their own hands and proceeded to raid a residential complex, Villa Mitez, clearing out sex workers and illegal immigrants, thought to be mostly Nigerian citizens, occupying apartments there. Their numbers soon swelled to a crowd of at least 300, when concerned citizens, curious onlookers and thrill-seekers joined the fray. Although there was a heavy police presence, there was no evidence of any violence and police generally kept a low profile. While some of the foreigners managed to escape, the crowd soon rounded up a group of women, thought to be sex workers. These women were loaded into the back of three police vehicles and taken away, but it is not clear

on what basis they were taken into custody and what had become of them since. The crowd then moved to Rustenburg North, another area notorious for drugs, before returning to Leyds Street later in the afternoon. These events were reportedly sparked by an incident earlier last week, when two young women, relatives of a member of the taxi association, were kidnapped and drugged before being taken to Gauteng. This incident could however not be confirmed.

According to residents, as many as 45 women have at times been seen occupying a single room in the complex, and they often appear to be suffering from the effects of narcotics. Reports of rape, assault and robbery are further rife, allegedly perpetrated by foreigners, while tales of kidnapping and human trafficking abound. Some allege that substantial quantities of narcotics are being brought in on a weekly basis to be distributed among sex workers and sold to addicts who frequent the area.

It is further alleged that many of the sex

workers are not on the streets by free will, but kidnapped and brought here. Once these women fall pregnant, the babies are registered in the names of foreigners, who are peddling drugs, and by virtue of having a child, they obtain permanent residence.

Further allegations were made that members of the police are in cahoots with the Nigerian drug lords, providing them with advance warning of any police action and thereby defeating the ends of justice.

Owners who knowingly rent their properties to tenants involved in criminal activities have been asked to evict these tenants. In this regard, the Greater Rustenburg Citizen's Forum for Change (GRCFC) said it would be acting through the legal system to trace those owners and act against them.

Meanwhile the authorities, fearing another outbreak of the xenophobic attacks on foreigners that plagued many areas of the country last year, decided to take swift action to avert such a situation, especially on the eve of the FIFA Soccer World Cup.

On Tuesday afternoon, a meeting between the Nigerian Association, representatives of various community forums, the Greater Rustenburg Taxi Cooperative and senior management of the South African Police Service, and the Rustenburg Local Municipality took place at the Ben Marais Hall. The meeting was requested by the Nigerian Association, and attended by more than 200 people, with at least 50 from the local Nigerian community. In this emotionally charged meeting, a representative of the Nigerian Association, Elias Nweke said members of his organisation are ashamed of the fact that Nigerians are associated with the many social ills in the city. He said that if these issues are not resolved, it could have serious consequences for Nigerians living in Rustenburg and called upon fellow Nigerians to clean up their act. He added that never before has he experienced such animosity

here as is now the case.

Christine Delpont of GRCFC said she is deeply concerned about women and children living under constant threat of falling victim to the drug trade and human trafficking. She said the community expects the police to keep them safe, but they are being failed by the authorities. She added that while she stands for non-violence, local matches of the Soccer World Cup would be "disallowed" if this matter is not resolved soon.

Representatives of the Greater Rustenburg Taxi Cooperative and the Hawker's Forum lambasted the police for tolerating corruption in their ranks. They were scathing in their criticism of the authorities for failing to take decisive action.

While a member of the taxi association displayed sex paraphernalia found during last week's raid on Villa Mitez, apparently used on 13-year-old girls and describing the conditions there, some women in the audience broke down emotionally and had to be escorted from the hall.

In his address, Dir Moatshe of the Rustenburg Police Station conceded that there were corrupt officials under his command, but defended the police, pointing out that it is often community members who play an active part in corrupting police officials. He lambasted the community for not doing its part in fighting crime, saying that he is faced with a personnel shortage and pointed out that it is also the responsibility of the community to remove the opportunity for people to commit crime. He added that the Department of Home Affairs should also be approached regarding the matter of illegal immigrants.

Further meetings have been scheduled.

* Meanwhile, Justice Minister Jeff Radebe said on Tuesday that a comprehensive new law against human trafficking will fast-tracked before the start of the Soccer World Cup, with perpetrators possibly facing life imprisonment or heavy fines under the bill.

Belastingbetalers ontmoet munisipale bestuurder, direkteure...

RUSTENBURG - "Die Rustenburg Belastingbetalersvereniging het 'n baie geslaagde gesprek met mnr Andries Boshoff, Munisipale Bestuurder van die Rustenburgse Munisipaliteit sowel as verskeie direkteure van die munisipaliteit gehad.

"Hoewel die vergadering dalk op ietwat van 'n verkeerde voet afgeskop het, het ons mekaar gou gevind en daar is oor 'n wye verskeidenheid kwessies van gemeenskaplike belang gepraat". Só het mnr Johan Schoeman en Johan de Klerk, onderskeidelik voorsitter en sekretaris van die Rustenburgse Belastingbetalersvereniging vroeër vandeeweek die verloop van 'n historiese ontmoeting met die Rustenburgse Munisipaliteit geskets.

Die Rustenburgse Belastingbetalersvereniging is veral positief nadat hy die versekering van mnr Boshoff gekry het dat daar heelwat aksie beloop is met betrekking tot die skoonmaak en opgradering van Rustenburg se vier hoof-toegangsroetes. Daar is tans heelwat verfraaiingsprojekte in Rustenburg aan die gang en onooglike ontwikkelingsprojekte - sommige wat intussen gestaak is - sal met op ordelike wyse uit die openbare oog verwyder word. Daar gaan veral streng opgetree word teen onwettige handelaars en ondernemings wat nie aan die munisipaliteit se vereistes voldoen nie, sal gedwing word om hul deure te sluit en die gebied te verlaat, het die Belastingbetalers van die munisipaliteit verneem.

Die Bealstingbetalersvereniging het geruime tyd reeds probleme met munisipale werkers wat nie hul kant bring nie en oral op terreine aan die slaap gevind word. Mense wat hulle voortaan hieraan skuldig maak, gaan kwaai vasgevat word. 'n Beroep is op die publiek gedoen om video-opnames van slapende werkers of mense wat lyf wegsteek aan die vereniging te besorg.

Volgens mnr Schoeman het die vereniging die versekering gekry dat alle slaggate ingevolge 'n spesiale herstelprogram reggemaak gaan

word. In dieselfde program sal padverkeersmerke op paaie oorgeverf word en dienslewering oor die algemeen met betrekking tot openbare infrastruktuur sal opnuut opgeskerp word.

Die Belastingbetalersvereniging is verlig dat hy op hierdie manier toegang tot die Rustenburg Munisipaliteit verkry het en is dankbaar vir die ondernemings wat gemaak is. "Ons is in dieselfde asem egter ook meer bewus van die uitdagings waarmee die munisipaliteit te kampe het byvoorbeeld 'n jurisdiksiegebied wat oor die afgeleone paar jaar meer as verdubbel het terwyl personeel as't ware ingekort is.

"Wetstoepassing en vervolging rondom verkeersaangeleenthede is en bly egter steeds vir die Belastingbetalersvereniging 'n groot kopseer en die Status Quo is nie vir ons aanvaarbaar nie. "Lets sal dringend aan die Direkoraat van Openbare Veiligheid gedoen moet word om te verseker dat hierdie direkoraat vaartbelyn gemaak en bestuur word", het Rustenburg Herald verneem. Daar is talle sake en praktyke by die Direkoraat Openbare Veiligheid waarmee die Belastingbetalersvereniging hoegenaamd nie tevrede is nie en wat as 'n saak van dringendheid reggestel sal moet word. Ons hoop op 'n dramatiese verbetering binne die afsienbare toekoms, anders sal selfs nog dringender aksie ons enigste alternatief wees", het Schoeman aan die Herald gesê. Die Belastingbetalersvereniging is ook bekommerd oor die toedrag van sake by openbare stortingsterreine en het ook dié saak met die Rustenburg Munisipaliteit aangeroer. Die moontlikheid van permanente wagtete word tans ondersoek.

Van die goeie nuus waaroor daar tugerapporteer kan word, is dat 'n nuwe openbare klagtesentrum op grondvloer by die munisipale gebou in Beyers Naudé-rylaan vroeër vandeeweek reeds in werking gestel het. Mense wat meer inligting hieroor verlang is welkom om Johan Schoeman by 082-455-7539 of Johan de Klerk by 082-891-3912 in verbinding te tree.

'Council is not bankrupt'

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Boshoff told Rustenburg Herald that the offsetting of the equitable share has been discussed with National Treasury and indications are that the Council will receive the funding withheld to date. "Council will also appoint a service provider by the end of March 2010 in order to embark on a comprehensive

revenue management programme. A revised credit control policy which will provide more flexibility to assist consumers that are in arrears, is about to be approved by Council, he said.

However, "the current financial position of Council does not allow a substantial capital budget from own funding over the next three financial years", he admitted. "All consumers of municipal services in arrears are called upon to make arrangements to settle their outstanding debts with council. Payment of your municipal accounts is the only way to ensure long term sustainability of Rustenburg", Boshoff concluded.

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