

Group Areas clampdown in city

Durban residents feel pinch

Janette Bennett

BLACK Durban residents are feeling the pinch of what they believe is a group areas clampdown.

Sayed Iqbal Mohamed, chairman of the Durban Central Residents' Association (DCRA), said this week that 21 eviction notices have been served on blacks in the Albert Park area in the past three months as compared to 15 eviction notices in the last six months of last year.

The DCRA claimed that "various estate agents were using 'breach' of leases as an excuse to evict residents".

The eviction notices last year had resulted in a meeting between residents and estate agents. Resolutions included an acceptance of the nominee system of renting flats, he said.

"Regardless of what they say, we believe the agents are guilty of racism.

"Despite the severe shortage of accommodation, many of the flats vacated after evictions last year are still empty. Just as we will not represent 'bad faith' tenants, we expect agents not to represent racist owners.

"Regardless of extensions and amendments to the Group Areas Act, as long as it is on the statute books, people will be exploited."

A spokesman for JH Isaacs said eviction notices were issued at the request of owners of buildings. "We act as agents for

our clients. Our bread and butter comes from this," he said.

He said "as far as I know", most of the tenants and sub-tenants threatened with eviction were black.

A director of RMS Syfrets said his organisation was opposed to the Group Areas Act and had not attempted any evictions in terms of the act. "But although the act is not actively used, it is still law.

"Perhaps some landlords apply the act. We do not."

The DCRA also criticised RMS following a directive to residents of a certain block that domestic servants should use only the service lift.

The director said the directive was "functional, not racist" and followed reports of "domestics slopping water from their buckets into the lifts".

As far as the Department of Local Government, Housing and Works is concerned, the situation regarding the implementation of the Group Areas Act has not changed. The department's regional representative, Bertie Bohmer, said the "mere fact" that inspectors had been appointed "indicates that the act is still being enforced".

He said "quite a few" complaints were lodged at group areas notification points — or "spy bureaus" as they are frequently referred to — each week.

Family can't live in their own home — See Page 5

City evictions force blacks out — DCRA

Janette Bennett

BLACK Durban residents believe they are victims of a group areas clampdown.

The Durban Central Residents Association said more eviction notices had been served on blacks in the Albert Park area in the past three months than in the last six months of 1989. They claimed estate agents used "breach" of leases as an excuse.

DCRA chairman Sayed Iqbal Mohamed said 21 blacks were served with eviction notices in the first three months of this year. From June to November last year, 15 people had received notices.

Evictions last year resulted in a meeting between residents and the estate agents. Resolutions included an acceptance of the nominee system of renting flats, he said.

"Estate agents are guilty of racist evictions. Despite the severe shortage of accommodation, many of the flats vacated after evictions last year are still empty."

A spokesman for JH Isaacs said eviction notices were issued at the request of owners of buildings. He said as far as he knew, most of the tenants and subtenants threatened with eviction were black.

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Housing is a basic human right, city ratepayers told

Witness Reporter

"WHAT South Africa needs now is a Human Rights Bill with special relevance to housing that will be applicable not only now but also in post-apartheid society," said guest speaker at the Pietermaritzburg Combined Ratepayers and Residents Association, Mr Iqbal Mohammed.

Mr Mohammed, who is chairman of the Durban Central Ratepayers Association,

said that South Africa also needed a housing bill representing the aspirations and needs of all the community, religious and political organisations and the affected masses they represent.

Dealing with implications of the Free Settlement Areas Act, Mr Mohammed said that as long as it existed it would be an added financial burden to ratepayers.

"Regardless of how the act will be carried

out it will still bring no relief to the people of South Africa. It will be an extension of the Group Areas Act. It is the government's responsibility to provide housing," he said.

"Once again, the South African government will be creating another ethnic group — the free settlers," he added.

Mr Mohammed said that at the moment there was still no clarity as to how these areas would function.