

# Tension between taximen and the homeless

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Reporter**

TENSION is building between taxi operators and the homeless community at Brook and Russel streets in Durban.

The chairperson of the Organisation of Civic Rights, Mr Sayed-Iqbal Mohamed said over the past week, numerous taxi operators had allegedly removed concrete stumps and now parked their vehicles on the pavements where the homeless lived.

"The taxi operators have asked the people to vacate the area who have been living here for more than a decade," he said.

According to Mr Mohamed the taxi representatives claimed to have bought the land but after investigation no one was aware of any negotiation to buy the land.

City Police, he said, had refused to take any action against the taxi operators even though tension was heightened after taxis were parked adjacent to several shacks and had asked the people to leave Brook Street.

Mr Mohamed acting on behalf of shack dwellers sent an urgent letter to the mayor asking for his intervention to prevent the possibility of violence and to ensure the rights of the homeless.

"The City Police decide on taxi ranks and are supposed to have control. Their intransigent attitude may cost the city dearly," he said.

Deputy Chief Constable Peter Gaffney of the City Police said the department was aware of the situation and had alerted policemen to maintain a visible presence in the area to prevent any altercation between the two groups.

The City Police was deciding what further steps to take, he said.

He said the land in question was owned by the City Council and the Central Sub Structure would need to make a decision on what to do with the land.