

Church blocks plan to build school in Philippi

Sanco has stepped in to intervene and leaders have now escalated the matter to the authorities.



The Kingdom Life Bible Church in Lower Crossroads is refusing to demolish its building on this land earmarked for a new school. Photo: Sandiso Phaliso

The deadline for a Philippi church to demolish its brick structure on land earmarked for the construction of a new high school has come and gone.

This week, members of South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) say they have escalated the matter against the Kingdom Life Bible Church in Lower Crossroads to police. But the church leaders are refusing to demolish their structure on government-owned land.

Sanco leaders told *GroundUp* that they've had several meetings with the pastor and church members in a bid to get to leave the land amicably. They were told that the church was given permission to use the land and it decided to build a brick-and-mortar structure there.

According to Sinethemba Mkhangelwa, an executive member of Sanco in the Western Cape, they have not been able to come to an agreement with the church's leaders, despite explaining to them the importance of having another school built in

Philippi.

“During our first meeting, the church pastor claimed that he first wanted an eviction notice in order to move while they are occupying the land illegally. This is when the meeting got chaotic,” he said. Mkhangelwa said the church had been given numerous warnings to remove the building.

Another Sanco leader, Nozuko Nyaba, explained that over a decade ago the organisation had given a letter to the church to hold its services on the land temporarily. “They were meant to build a shack because the land belonged to the municipality,” said Nyaba.

She said that the church building is also illegal because it did not apply to the City of Cape Town for building rights on that land.

When GroundUp went to the church on Sunday, most members refused to talk. One of the church’s leaders, Luzuko Hlulani only said, “We have no comment regarding this issue until further notice.”

Ward 35 Councillor Mboniswa Chitha confirmed that the church must be removed immediately. “The church members should have gone to the municipality for permission. Instead, they continued to build a brick hall in secret.”

Chitha said the community of Lower Crossroads desperately needs a new school. “I am not against the existence of a church in the area, if only it was built legally.”

Western Cape Education Department (WCED) spokesperson Millicent Merton told GroundUp that “the WCED cannot compensate the church for an illegal structure on provincial property which is earmarked for school developments”.

Merton said no date has been set yet for when construction will start.

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