

Cape Town's railway occupiers are being moved but there are snags with water and sanitation supply

Scores of families who have been relocated from the railway line in Philippi to a temporary site next to Stock Road station say they have had to endure days without adequate provision of water or working toilets. As a result, many families are now refusing to move until the issue is resolved.

By Sandiso Phaliso ^{27 Dec 2023}



Source: [Pixabay](#)

The 891 households being relocated are part of Operation Bhekela, a joint operation between Prasa, City of Cape Town, the Housing Development Agency, national departments of transport, human settlements, and public works, and their provincial departments, to clear Cape Town's Central Line of the 5,195 shacks built along the railway at Langa, Nyanga, and Philippi.

People settled on the railway line and rail reserve during the Covid lockdown in 2020, when many of them could no longer afford to pay rent as backyarders.

Trains had already stopped running on the line in October 2019 because of theft and vandalism. This situation was exacerbated by Prasa's cancellation of security contracts.

Now the line has been partially cleared up until Nyanga station, with the latest relocation, which began in the first week of December, as part of the plan to reinstate the remainder of the line – to Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain – by March next year.

But due to problems with water and sanitation at the Stock Road station temporary relocation site, many of the families are refusing to move until services are provided. (There are taps and chemical toilets at the Stock Road station itself, where the occupation has taken place.)

While the land belongs to Prasa, Parliament's Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa) was told that the City of Cape Town would be responsible for the provision of water, sanitation and waste removal.

Chemical toilets have been placed on site, but they were not connected to the necessary containers to make them function.

FACILITIES & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

This is where people are occupying Metrorail's Central Line in Cape Town

Sandiso Phaliso and GroundUp staff 26 Oct 2023



People we spoke to said Prasa had instructed them not to speak to the media, and they were asked to remain anonymous.

“I am not moving there because there are no services such as water and toilets,” a 39-year-old mother of two daughters said.

A 30-year-old mother, who moved to the Stock Road station site, said that without running water and working toilets, people were relieving themselves in the bush.

“We can’t be expected to live a normal life under these circumstances,” she said. “For now we have to go to the nearest settlement, which is Heinz Park and Acacia, to ask the people there to assist us with water. They have been helpful, but we don’t know for how long will they help us.”

Precast concrete blocks have been placed as foundations for relocated shacks, but some families said their size is too small to accommodate their structures. A 55-year-old father of five children said he would not move to the site because it was too small and there was no space in the yard to park his two cars.

“I can’t go there with the current arrangements because it is not viable ... I have a bigger family and have a lot of furniture,” he said.

Prasa spokesperson Andiswa Makanda said the provision of water and sanitation was the City’s mandate, and that toilets had been delivered to the site.

City of Cape Town spokesperson Luthando Tyhalibongo said a water tanker was providing water twice a week.

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