

Cathcart Hospital rumours spark week of protests

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Police are monitoring the N6 between Komani and Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape after nearly a week of protests in Cathcart that started on Friday, 9 February, 2024.



Source: [Pexels](#)

Two trucks were set alight and cars were stoned between Cathcart and Stutterheim. On Monday, two boys, both aged 15, appeared in Cathcart Magistrates' Court accused of torching a water tanker and a delivery truck on Friday.

They were not asked to plead. They were released under the care of their parents and will appear in court on Friday, 16 February.

As of Tuesday morning, car stoning incidents have continued. Police spokesperson Siphokazi Mawisa has warned motorists of the danger on the N6.

The protests followed rumours that the provincial Department of Health plans to downgrade Cathcart Hospital. This came after officials visited the hospital and staff were overheard talking about it becoming a day hospital.

Amahlathi Local Municipality spokesperson Anathi Nyoka said protesting residents are also demanding Home Affairs, Sassa and Social Development establish permanent offices instead of the weekly mobile units.

Community leader Buyisile Booï said the mobile units are not reliable. Cathcart is surrounded by 92 farms but has few services.

Hospital downgrade consequences

“Instead of getting services, our government wants to take the only thing that we have, which is the hospital. At this stage we feel that the protest is the only language our officials understand,” said Booï.

‘If they downgrade this hospital we will have to go to Stutterheim when we are sick at night, meaning people will be forced to hire transport and that will cost them R1,000 a single trip. If one decides to go to Komani, they will have to hire a car for R1,500,” he said.

Zonke Mjandana, a hospital board member, said only after protests erupted and they made inquiries was it confirmed that the provincial department is downgrading all hospitals with less than 50 beds.

“Ours currently has 38 beds, and according to the department the hospital is not busy at night. As board members we understand residents’ frustration and the sad part is that we were also not aware of this move. Should they have informed us in time we were going to dispute it,” she said.

Spokesperson for the department Mkhululi Ndamase said the department will comment after a scheduled meeting with the board, officials and MEC Nomakhosazana Meth.

Residents have vowed to continue with the protest until the hospital issue is resolved.

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