

# **CROSSROADS RESISTANCE AND REMOVAL**

**The Black Sash believes that Crossroads has neither experienced a natural disaster nor unprovoked black on black violence. Affidavits have been collected which allege collusion between the security forces and the Witdoeke vigilantes who destroyed the Nyanga Bush, Nyanga Extension and Portland Cement Camps. Minister Heunis' statement that upgrading Crossroads necessitates a depopulation of the camp shows that the Crossroads events have dovetailed neatly with government plans of forced removal to Khayelitsha. The people of Crossroads, who have defied apartheid's designs have been subjected to a new and invidious form of forced removal involving vigilantes, security forces and curtailed public services and amenities.**

**We condemn this action of the government.**

**We demand a judicial commission of inquiry into the role of the security forces in Crossroads in recent weeks.**

**We are committed to action if called by the refugees in defence of their right to reclaim their land and rebuild their homes.**

AREA DESTROYED  
BY FIRE

# Crossroads: A special kind of removal

FOR the past week the public has been bombarded by media coverage of "black on black" violence at Crossroads.

The results of the conflict are devastating - 20 000 to 30 000 homeless, between 25 and 44 people dead and up to 3 000 homes burnt. Thousands of people are streaming into Site B at Khayelitsha as a benevolent Western Cape Development Board helps the homeless, provides tents and helps a variety of welfare organizations.

One should not, however, let the image of the "witdoeke" fighting the "comrades" obscure some of the underlying reasons for the present conflict.

The net result has been that within less than a week the "witdoeke" of Old Crossroads have been able to do what the government and the Housing man of the Year, Mr Timo Bezuidenhoud, could not do - remove the three most coherent and consistently resistant squatter communities in the Crossroads complex.

## Scarce land

These communities, under the leadership of Mr Christopher Toise, Mr Melford Yamile and Mr Alfred Sipika, have borne the brunt of the past week's conflict.

Although some aspects of the conflict go back a long time, the present situation can be traced to struggles over scarce land and resources in the Crossroads complex.

When Dr Gerrit Viljoen announced in October 1984 that all squatters - legal and illegal - would move to Khayelitsha, all the squatter communities categorically refused. This apparent deadlock between the government and the squatter leaders broke with the February 1985 conflict over the threat of removal to Khayelitsha, in which 18 people died.

Dr Viljoen in an attempt to defuse the situation, offered Old Crossroads a long sought-after upgrade scheme. There was one problem as far as both the government and the leadership of Old Crossroads were concerned - too many people living on the land to make the upgrade scheme feasible.

Mr Bezuidenhoud managed, through what he calls contact and the offer of 18 month permits, to persuade a number of leaders to move to the newly prepared Site C at Khayelitsha. By May last year more than 35 000 people were living there.

By JOSETTE COLE

of the Surplus People Project, Western Cape

The squatter communities of Mr Toise, Mr Yamile and Mr Sipika continued to refuse to move unless given full rights to live and work in Cape Town.

In Old Crossroads itself, new dynamics were at work. When Mr Johnson Ngxobongwana came out of jail in the middle of 1985, having been arrested along with the "comrades" of New Crossroads and Nyanga over resistance to rent increases, he suddenly turned against progressive organizations in the area.

The Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO), the United Women's Organization (UWO) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) were under constant verbal attack inside Crossroads.

These organizations had become a threat to Mr Ngxobongwana's political and economic control over Old and New Crossroads. CAYCO in particular had made allegations to the community that Mr Ngxobongwana and his executive were corrupt.

In an attempt to re-establish his credibility, Mr Ngxobongwana attempted to hold elections late last year. This was thwarted by the reluctance of outside organizations such as the Black Sash and the Urban Foundation to monitor them as requested.

The elections took place, however, in February this year. These elections are critical to any understanding of the present conflict and implicit - if not explicit - government support of the Old Crossroads leadership.

The committee (elected by little more than 5 000 votes in a community of at least 87 000 adults) is in effect a potential community council or black local authority. In a letter to the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, written one week after these elections, the new committee offered themselves as "a link between us as a community and Urban Foundation and your Planning and Development department".

## White paper

It is clear that the aspirations of this new committee of Mr Ngxobongwana fused with

present government strategies of "orderly urbanization" and black local authorities.

On its own admission, the government can no longer implement influx control and forced removals. In the eyes of the international community and in the townships in practice, centralized control is no longer feasible.

In the recently published white paper on urbanization, the government made it clear that local authorities would be expected to take over controls of squatting and "orderly movement".

What begins to emerge from the chaos and confusion of the past few days' events is a coincidence of interests between a Crossroads elite (more than 50 percent of the new committee are relatively affluent businessmen) desperate to maintain political and economic control over the area as well as upgrade Old Crossroads, and present government strategies at a number of levels:

- \*The removal of the communities of Mr Toise, Mr Yamile and Mr Sipika from the Crossroads satisfies the objectives of both parties.

- \*The Old Crossroads committee can continue to rule the area as they wish and upgrade the community, using the kind of space they need and have requested from Mr Chris Heunis - the "tennis

courts", the "four-roomed houses" and the "police station".

- \*The security forces gain control over an area seen to be a security risk and hot-bed of radical resistance.

- \*Orderly urbanization carries on, this time obscured by the humanitarian assistance of the Western Cape Development Board and the "witdoeke" versus "comrades" conflict.

What we have witnessed this past week is essentially a removal of a very special kind. As thousands of squatters from the three camps affected struggle to survive as refugees, Mr Heunis, who visited the area on Wednesday, talks of preparing the "damaged and evacuated area" with a view to upgrading it to the benefit of the community.

For the moment the government and the Old Crossroads leadership appear to have scored a victory: Two-thirds of the residents moved "voluntarily" from Old Crossroads within one week.

The process only serves to prove that minority rule, whether black or white, will be resisted. No doubt the squatters will reorganize and continue their struggle.

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**The Black Sash believes that all South Africans have a right to choose whether or not to live in urban areas. We believe that the root cause of the present disaster at Crossroads is the grossly inadequate allocation of acceptable land for people who are in the process of urbanization.**

**We call on the authorities to acknowledge these rights and to aid in the re-establishment of the devastated areas for the communities involved.**

## ***BE AWARE OF THE REALITIES OF CROSSROADS***

- \* read your newspaper***
- \* write to the newspaper and popular magazines***
- \* arrange house meetings at which Sash could provide a speaker***
- \* write to your Member of Parliament***
- \* attend meetings organized around the issues involved***
- \* phone teleletters***
- \* support the welfare organizations***
- \* be understanding if your employees are absent or late***
- \* join organizations concerned with these issues***
- \* pass this pamphlet on to your friends***

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