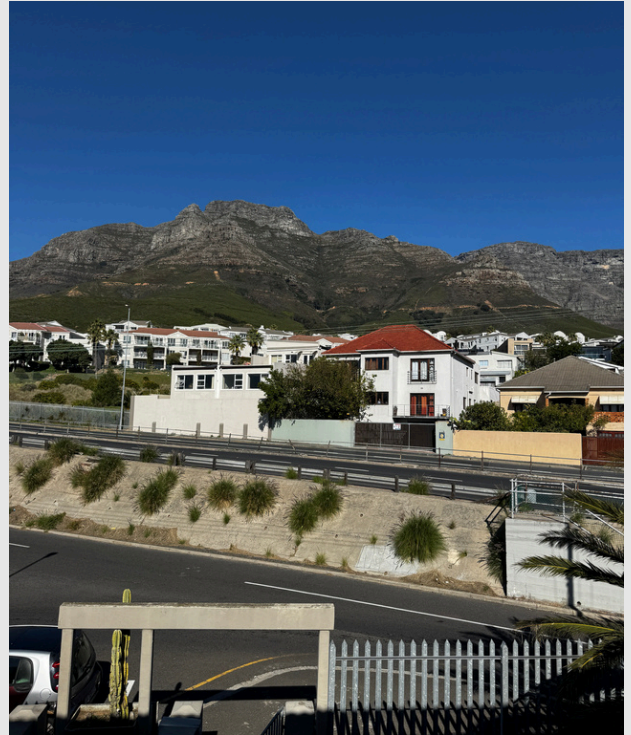


NEWSLETTER

A PROMISE UNKEPT

Nearly two decades ago, a Cape Town resident moved into what was promised to be low-cost, dignified housing. Since then, that promise has fallen short of expectations. “I moved in 2007,” “at the time, I barely qualified,” Shannaz explains. It was a difficult time, but she was able to sign a lease and gain stability. Now, that stability is being threatened.

For years, she and her neighbors have lived in uncertainty, “they’re being very secretive,” she says, referring to government workers who have been visiting and entering units without the resident’s consent, and asking residents to sign a new lease, even though they already have one.



A NEW LEASE IS BEING PUSHED ONTO THEM

In Shannaz’s case, she refuses to sign a new lease because she fears that her original lease may be the last remaining protection she has.

In 2015, the government proposed relocating residents to Pelican Park. Upon visiting the site, many residents refused to move because the new location lacked proper infrastructure; no pavements, no privacy, and units so cramped that “only a single bed could fit.” The community resisted. “Back then, we stood up to them. The community was strong.”



Now, the pressure is rising again. New leases do not include generational security. “If something happens to me, where do my children go?” They’ve lived in the unit all their lives. Her granddaughter is deaf, and she worries about what displacement would mean for her schooling and stability.

Even worse are the double standards. In 2019, about two years after Shannaz moved into her apartment, one of the documents she received from the Department of Local Government and Housing stated that only individuals qualified for the capital subsidy regime. Now, “government workers are getting subsidies to live here.” Why are they in low-cost housing when they can afford to go elsewhere? These units were originally designated for the city’s most vulnerable, but now this purpose has disappeared.

Many of her neighbors, elderly and weary, share her concern. “It is stressful to live here,” and they are tired of the uncertainty. To her, it feels like a broader effort to push poor people out of the city entirely. “They don’t want us here, bottom line [...] you must have money [...] but myself, my children, we are not good enough to live here.” Her request is simple: “We don’t want to be rich.” These families don’t ask for more than a small, decent, comfortable place to live. Now they’re trying to take even that.

