



**Open letter by Lorenzo Davids, CEO of Community Chest in response to the statement by Cllr Rob Quintas on the Hout Bay eviction actions today by the City's Law Enforcement and related agencies on 11 June 2020**

Dear Cllr Rob Quintas

I find the Hout Bay actions by the City of Cape Town today extremely disturbing. There is a humane side to law and order. There is a human rights side to law and order. No one is in support of land grabs and invasion of property. We are, however, all aware that some 12 million citizens have no roof over their heads in this country. When you destroy people's shelter and housing structures, it is disingenuous to claim that you are not evicting them. That was the same language the Apartheid government used, to force people to move from what were their homes. I ask you to stop this action. You post pictures on your Facebook page of your dogs that are nice and warm under blankets - and the very next post is about people's shelter and structures you are destroying.

I realize they might be on City land as you state. That is illegal. I know that. The question to our sense of humanity and moral leadership is: knowing that, how do we go about, as a caring democracy, to humanly engage people and help facilitate their need for appropriate indigent housing? With housing being such a crisis in this country, I would think that a natural component of good government would be that you would have people who are professional facilitators to help in such delicate negotiations. There are people like that in the country. If structure and shelter destruction is only a law enforcement activity, know that you will have rioting and opposition, as you should. You are plunging the depths of inhumanity, on this cold, wet and icy Cape Town day, towards fellow human beings who are your biblical neighbour, by your and the City's actions.

When you refer to the structures, I note that you do not refer to the people - the humans. You choose to state that the humans have ignored your notices. However, in destroying their structures you prefer not to reference them at all. That is very sad. Because in every story, there are humans - and humans matter, sir. If I am one of 12 million people in need of a house, I probably would need to squat as well where it is safe. With my wife and children. It is tough being law-abiding when the law does not help me to be abiding. Defiance of the law, which robs my family and me of our dignity, becomes the only recourse. I pray to God that there are no children affected by your decisions today. One cannot continue to keep one's feet on people's necks and not expect a response. What would I do if that was me? What would you do if that was you? I appeal to you to stop this action. You can. I appeal to you as a decent human being to stop this. As a country, we can do better. Your party is not the only ones to have done such apartheid-style destruction of property. Your opposition, the ANC, has also done this in other municipalities where they govern. This is not about your politics, sir. It's about our common humanity to work together to build a great country. Today, your actions are part of the derailing of that project.

A priest once said: When we look at injustice, we have to say to ourselves and others, in the same breath: "Things do not have to be like this." Today I say to you sir: "Things do not have to be like this." We need a better version of ourselves - of all of us. Every day. Please stop this destruction of shelter. If anything, the City should be welcoming houseless people to put up temporary structures on City land to protect them from the cold, the rain, the hail - and death. That sir, is what a caring government does and this applies to the ANC as well.

Sincerely

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER** | Lorenzo Davids

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