

TONGAAT ATTORNEY CHARGED FOR ATTEMPTED MURDER AND ASSAULT

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A prominent civic rights campaigner was allegedly punched, kicked and had a gun pointed at him by a Tongaat attorney and his wife when he addressed residents of a flat in Main Road, Tongaat last night.

Durban Metro councillor and head of the Organisation of Civic Rights (OCR), Sayed-Iqbal Mohamed has laid a charge of assault and attempted murder against attorney Godfrey Pillay and his wife, Poovendree who is also an attorney.

Mr Mohamed was called by irate residents of Bagman Centre (formerly named Kajee Mansions) to address them on the deplorable conditions of the flats which was recently purchased by Bagman Centre CC which is represented by Godfrey Pillay.

According to Mohamed the tenants were harassed, bullied and had their water supply to their flats disconnected which Pillay confirmed he was responsible for in a letter to the OCR.

On Saturday Mohamed was addressing the 22 flat dwellers when he was allegedly punched by Mrs Pillay and kicked by Godfrey Pillay who then allegedly pulled out a firearm and pointed it at him.

Pillay was accompanied by his brother who was also allegedly armed.

Mohamed was rescued by two policemen, Sgt. Themba Sibiya and Det. Khuzwayo who are also tenants in the building.

They took the couple to the police station but the police allegedly refused to disarm them.

Sgt. Sibiya who is also chairman of the Tenants Committee told the Coastal Weekly that the people in the flats are living in deplorable conditions.

He said the walls were cracking and water continuously seeps through.

Sgt. Sibiya said when the new owners took over they were asked to pay an increase in rental ranging from R100 to R200. He added that they had no problem in paying the increased rental but wanted an assurance from Pillay that he will address their problems first which he agreed to do.

However, instead of renovating the building Pillay sent them final notices to pay the increase or face evictions.

When the residents refused to pay up, Pillay allegedly illegally disconnected the water supply and cut off the electricity of certain residents.

Pillay and an unknown man were allegedly caught disconnecting the electricity but Pillay denied this.

However in a letter to the OCR dated December 6, he states: "We confirm that the water supply was interrupted yesterday but place on record that the water supply is going to be physically disconnected today (December 6) should no rental be paid forthwith. The tenants do not pay for water, accordingly they cannot have access to water."

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Residents also claim refuse collection came to a standstill as bags of dirt lay outside the flat for days.

When the dwellers complained Pillay allegedly dumped all the refuse outside flat A8 which is occupied by Terene Reddy whom he allegedly regarded as a problematic resident.

The matter was reported to the health department of the North Local Council but no action was taken.

The Organisation of Civic Rights has vowed an all out war to ensure justice for tenants who have been treated unfairly by Pillay.

"Pillay is the pits, especially for a man who is an officer of the court," said Mohamed.

He added the situation was unacceptable and has promised the residents he was going to report the matter to the Natal Law Society.

Mohamed has also written to Commissioner B A Ntanjana, Area Commissioner for Durban North SAPS, urgently requesting the investigation be transferred from Verulam and Tongaat because he said he has learned through reliable sources that Pillay and his wife are well connected in these areas.

Mr Pillay said he was not aware he was being charged for assault and attempted murder.

However he did say that charges were laid by him against some of the flat dwellers for assault, robbery and attempted murder.