

C19 Monitor Report : Tauriq Jenkins

**Monitor C19 Report, Sunday 12 April, 2020** : *Tauriq Jenkins (member of an independent task team comprising medical health, legal, social services, gender experts, and civil society invited by the South African Human Rights Commission to report on the relocation camp at Strandfontein Sports Complex)*

## **Glossary**

**Covid-19, referred herein as "C19"**

**Strandfontein Sports Complex also referred to as Strandfontein Camp / Camp / Strandfontein site.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Strandfontein Camp has been initiated by the City of Cape Town in response to the C19 National Lockdown announced by South African president Cyril Ramaphosa. The site, which is managed by the City of Cape Town as part of efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19, has been operational since Sunday 5 April. The project has been met with resistance by residents of Strandfontein who claim they were not consulted before it was constructed. The site primarily caters to street based individuals, however, its purpose and effectiveness has come under dispute. Issues of human rights violations and unsuitability have been raised. In response to these concerns the South African Human Rights Commission invited an independent task team of medical health, legal, social services, gender experts and civil society to do an inspection in situ.

## **SUMMARY**

It has been reported by the City of Cape Town that there are no cases of C19 on the Strandfontein site. A way to determine what the C19 situation is at the site, is to test all the occupants as well as the medical staff, management, the security, and law enforcement on the site. Only eleven (11) people have been tested for C19 (out of approximately 1500 + people residing in the tents). According to feedback, none of the 11 have tested positive, however, a comprehensive assessment of the C19 situation on the site has not been completed.

A most recent example of this is when on Sunday, April 12, the Department of Justice and Correctional Services said that the East London Correctional Centre in the Eastern Cape had recorded 26 positive cases of Covid-19 at its Medium C Female Centre. An official tested positive at the facility on April 6. The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) on 8 and 9 April then conducted a mass screening of 268 offenders at the Medium C Female Centre, testing 30 offenders who showed symptoms of Covid-19, and 266 officials.

Of serious concern is that there is little to no psycho-social options on site to deal with the

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trauma of arrival to the site, the lockdown itself, as well as the escalating psychological discomfort permeating throughout the camp.

Medical services stop at 4PM, and are currently being administered via a paper system which allows only for an update after 4PM. This means that inquiries made before 4PM will be responded to with the previous days findings.

There appears to be no integrated reporting system between the medical unit and the site management. Daily reports on each tent inclusive of health matters, as well as, a register of the occupants are not done.

On Saturday, April 10th during the site visit, the medical tent manager was given strict instructions not to give out any information regarding questions about the medical statistics, and reports to the SAHRC independent task team.

The medical unit manager said any inquiries must go to Cll Badroodien.

We were informed that there is a problem with ambulance availability and that the City is stretched in as far as doctors, nurses and medical staff. A question to be asked is what is the relationship between Western Cape Government and the City with regards to the medical service delivery needed for the site. There appears to be limited assistance coming in from Province, the reasons for which are unclear.

While the City of Cape Town stated that C19 screenings are in place, it is now common medical knowledge that asymptomatic carriers are a large percentage of C19 transmitters. It is unclear as to whether the current screening process takes this into account. Out of the approximately 1500+ occupants, reports reveal that 11 have been tested for C19.

It is important to note, as mentioned by the site manager, that the doctors deployed at the medical unit do not enter the large tents for fear of contracting C19. All patients, including people with symptoms, complaints, illness are identified by non-medical staff and 'volunteers' in each tent. They then inform the disaster risk management team who then transport, stretcher out, or accompany by foot the occupants to the medical tent. In other words, there are no onsite medical inspections and visits to where the occupants are living.

People with conditions, illness and complaints are often waiting for hours, in some cases days before they are permitted to leave the gated tent area for medical assistance. There are occupants without ARV's, no condoms are available, cigarette smoking is prevalent in tents, there are shortages of soap, and apart from one tent, which has some using them, no masks are being used. There is no hand sanitizer in any of the large tents. Mattresses were still not in the tents we visited yesterday.

There is overwhelming oral testimony of people having been forced by Law Enforcement to the collection points to board the busses to Strandfontein, including being delivered there directly, or being beguiled with promises of which include being tested for C19, enough space for distancing, food, shelter, a tent each, mattresses. Being fully briefed and informed to make a decision is very different to being groomed into acquiescence through the promise of safer conditions, being well fed and looked after.

Regarding the journey to Strandfontein, the strategies employed by city and state officials

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fail to empower towards an informed decision or choice involving one's life.

Having observed some of the collection points in Ward 57, it becomes clear that there is no autonomy to make a decision freely in the face of a veiled threat and coercion, as well as in the context of the refrain or trope employed of 'no guarantee of what may happen after'.

The notion of 'voluntary' must be questioned at its deepest ethical level, so too the notion of consent.

Numerous complaints were received about the quality of drinking water. The narrative expressed is that of being in a prison, against people's will and without consent. It's a lockdown in the sense of incarceration not in the sense of medical and health safety. Both from my observations and discussions, feedback and interviews with the occupants, the tents are incubators for COVID19 with people sleeping on top of each other and tightly huddled in queues during meal times. Within the confines of the large tents and the spaces around them, there is no indication of educational awareness on C19, most importantly for the need of social distancing. There was no professional orientation debrief for occupants upon arrival, and no process of continued check-ins are in place.

Hygiene is a serious problem, floors are not being scrubbed with detergents, no toothpaste or tooth brushes are available through the site, and on Sunday there were areas of dampness due to the previous nights' heavy rain and leakages in the tents. There is a shortage of hot water.

Many occupants are suffering major drug use withdrawal without treatment. According to testimonies of the occupants interviewed, methadone and medical support for drug use withdrawal were to be made available on site. This has not been the case.

The City has created a vicinity where those who cannot produce confirmed physical addresses which may allow their return to homes are entrapped in conditions primed as a catalyst for C19 transmission.

Much psychological damage is done already, the health risks after 9 days without intervention presents a situation where remedial measures to improve the site are ostensibly already too late.

Undoubtedly, what has been committed is the construction of a perverse dystopian looking glass of inhumanity and indignity.

But most egregious is that these tents are living monuments of slow mass infection, which may lead to the compromised health and even death of some of our most vulnerable.

To place approximately 1500+ people in confined spaces against their wishes compounded by the concept of non-existent social distancing for 9 days is a direct criminal violation of lockdown regulations, and a crime against our humanity. Tents have had anywhere between 600 to 750 people dwelling in them at certain points during this lockdown period.

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Meal time in Tent 4. Groups are crowded and stacked together with minimal adherence to social distancing.

As of this Sunday April 12, the conditions at the site have remained unchanged in terms of social distancing, and hygiene. Those being held in the tents did not have access to soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

Yesterday (April 11) and today (April 12), most of the tents still had no mattresses, and apart from one tent, masks are not being used. There is still no social distancing being practiced. Hand sanitisers are not available in the large tents.

From the beginning, two blankets were given to each person upon arrival, one to be placed on the floor and one to be used as an actual blanket. Complaints of freezing cold at night have been consistent throughout the visits.

### **OCCUPANCY and CONDITIONS IN TENTS**

Currently there are 8 large tents that occupants are staying in. The figure of total occupancy is approximately 1500+.

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Since Tuesday (April 7), three (3) additional large tents have been erected.

Situated next to each large tent is a smaller tent used for mostly administration, storage, and food distribution. The first tent, managed by the "Haven Shelter" houses approximately 600 people. The second is managed by "UBUNTU Circle of Courage" which housed over 400 at one point, now has approximately 200. The third is managed by "Oasis" which has approximately 470, the 4th tent next the OASIS tent (referred to in this report as "Tent 4" site) has between approximately 200 and 250. It should be noted that these occupants rioted and tried to escape the facility from the main "Ubuntu" tent. Tent 4 had no staff on site.

We were informed that the manager has not visited the Tent 4 site since the 'breakaway' and that there are tensions between him and the occupants.

Apart from the first three tents, there were no staff on site at the other tents.

The manager of Oasis informed us that they have stopped taking more people and will 'decant' the occupancy into another tent.

Occupancy in the tents mentioned are divided up and allocated according to area zones similar to the City's Ward boundaries. However, there is also a random placement of people which may not correspond to the area zones.

Registers of who are in the tents are still being drawn up after 8 days of occupancy. This creates a challenge for monitoring and health checks.

Doctors, and nurses from the main health tent, which is situated at the far end of the encampment, do not enter the large tents for fear of contracting C19.

People with suspected C19 symptoms, ailments, and complaints are transported, stretchered, or have to walk over to the health tent for inspection and assistance. There are no medical checks by the onsite practitioners outside of their tent.

Each large tent has a team of management monitors who are aided by 'team leaders' drawn from the occupants in each tent. They report to the staff on duty who can communicate to the various departments on site. These include disaster management, the displacement unit, law enforcement, the private security company on the site, and the health team.

There is no integrated system of reports being published daily from various departments on the site. The management of the site includes the logistics around the food, security and maintenance of tents, and the medical health service.

On Saturday the 11th of April, the manager of the health tent said she was given strict instructions not to answer any questions. She said we would have to ask either Cll Badroodien or another manager who is situated off site and in charge of the medical reports collation. The current paper system in the medical tent means reports are done manually. We were told updates are available after 4PM everyday. Enquiries, according to the manager, made before 4PM will reflect the previous days findings. A recommendation was made to install an electronic data system to assist speeding up the collation of the

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reports.

The health service providers end their shift at 4PM.

There is no medical assistance available after that for all 8 tents.

A major issue brought to our attention by the interim site manager was that Western Cape Government was not assisting the medical initiative.

All doctors, and nurses were from City Health, and were assisted by SHAWCO medical students.

### **MEDICAL INCIDENTS DURING THE VISIT :**

On Saturday, April 11, at the Haven Tent around 3PM monitors found a 68 year old man with a catheter lying by his side, with blood in the tube, was doubled over in pain, lying on a blanket. One of the Doctors on the team examined him and requested the site team leader to request an ambulance. A request was confirmed at 4:45PM.

At 6PM, the log was checked at the command Centre, and no request for an ambulance had been logged.

An ambulance arrived eventually at 9pm.

On Sunday April 12, monitors called Victoria Hospital and confirmed the resident had been discharged (and returned to Strandfontein Camp).

While monitors were present a fight broke out between two occupants on Saturday (April 11). Law enforcement stood outside the fence and watched on as the shift operators dealt with the situation. One of the men involved in the fight was knocked down while the other walked off. A doctor on the SAHRC team assessed him and reported that he needed to be taken to hospital. It occurred at 5:30PM by which time the health team had already left, and an ambulance was called.

### **SECURITY AND FENCING**

These large white canvas structures stretch across the Strandfontein sports fields. Circling each tent is a fence guarded by the private security company called Helios Security. The occupants of the tent are restricted to areas between the tents and the fences around each tent, and cannot intermingle with the other tents. Helios guards patrol the gates, restricting entry and exit to the management team, essentially servicing deliveries of food and water, and those allowed to leave usually for medical reasons. Surrounding the private security is Law Enforcement whose cars, and vans are parked in numbers throughout the camp. The entrance to the camp is heavily guarded, with an ID check point that monitors permits. Behind each large tent are smaller tents, toilet facilities and showers.

The entire perimeter has a vibracrete wall patrolled by guards 24/ 7 to stop 'escapees'.

### **INTERVIEWS AND RESPONSES FROM OCCUPANTS :**

Extracted from various interviews conducted on site on Saturday, 11 April 2020 and Sunday, 12 April, 2020 were the following responses and issues raised :

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a) Fear of COVID19 transmission.

Complaints of tightly packed communal areas, lack of social distancing, compounded by prevalence of TB and other respiratory ailments

b) Being misled about the conditions they would expect.

According to many of the testimonies and interviews, the following (reoccurring) conditions have been identified :

1. That they would be tested for C19
2. That they would have a mattress and individual tent
3. That they would be appropriately distanced from each other
4. That they would have three meals a day
5. A hot shower and soap.

Those who informed them of these promises include Ward Councillors, social workers, CID employees and security, and Law Enforcement.

c) Prior to arrival to Strandfontein, a common complaint by occupants was that of being threatened with arrest and / or being told they would go to Pollsmoor if they didn't go home or take the bus to Strandfontein. Both SAPS and Law Enforcement were identified as the main entities that expressed the above line of instruction.

d) Some were forcefully collected by SAPS or Law Enforcement and taken to collection points or taken straight to Strandfontein

e) Not being updated on what's happening on the site.

f) Many people have filed home addresses in order to be released. This information is checked by SAPS, and once verified will be taken to the homes. There are complaints of non-responsiveness to this ongoing process.

g) Feelings of being imprisoned on the site. The site has been described by interviewees as 'worse than prison', 'concentration camp', including being 'trapped' against their will.

h) Food is not enough. In all tents, while the food quality was described mostly as unpalatable, there were numerous complaints of the portions being too small. Some complained that no juice or warm beverages were being provided.

i) Toilets, showers and hygiene. Complaints about intermittent to no availability of hot water for showers, inadequate supply of soap.

## **TRANSCRIPTION DOCUMENT : STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEWS**

DOCUMENT CONTROL Document version: Version 1 Date of document: 13 April 2020  
Place of Interview Strandfontein Camp Interviewing Authority: Independent Task Team of the Human Rights

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Commission Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins / [tauriqishere@gmail.com](mailto:tauriqishere@gmail.com)

## **STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEW 1**

Human Rights Monitoring Mission

Interview 1

Saturday 11 April 2020

Time: 5PM

Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins (TJ)

Main Interviewee: Ivor Bester (IB)

Secondary Interview: Riedwaan Ram (sp)

IB: My name is Ivor Bester, I sleep on the streets in Mowbray.

The social worker Ingrid, when this whole corona business started, first she supplied us with food, and then she told us that it would be better off here at this camp because they were going to supply us with individual tents so that we can stay. We were going to be kept far away from one another, at least a distance, everyone is going to have a mattress, everyone is going to get toiletries. She made unnecessary promises. We understand that some of them are not, whatever. But she shouldn't have done that. She shouldn't have made these promises. The living conditions here - we don't even have soap, we don't have a toothbrush, we don't have toothpaste. How can we brush our teeth and wash? We sleep next to each other, and we are not even a metre, we are not even half a metre distance from one another. We practically slept on top of one another. We sleep with two blankets, one to sleep on top of and one to sleep underneath. So, basically sleeping on the cold floor. And the food is also pathetic. Sorry to say. Not to these people who are giving the food. But the food is pathetic here. We eat more, on the streets, more healthier, much better food, much better sleeping conditions. The showers are not working all the time, sometimes there is not even water. The water that we drink is also pathetic. You must taste that water, it's basically non-potable water. And I mean we come from decent households.

TJ: Have you been tested?

IB: Not yet.

TJ: And how long have you been here for?

IB: I've been here since Tuesday, and today is Saturday almost Sunday again.

RR: And none of us have been tested at all.

My name is Riedwaan Ram (sp)

TJ: Where do you stay?

RR: At the moment I am from Rondebosch/Mowbray. But I gave my address here in Beacon Alley, three, four times already.



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As he said, the living conditions are atrocious where we are practically sleeping on top of each other. There is no light in the tent.

TJ: Where were you collected?

IB & RR [unison]: In Mowbray.

IB: Please tell them what Ingrid promised you.

RR: She promised us we will each have a tent of our own, we will have our social distance, we're gonna get tested immediately when we get here for corona, and there will be means made available to us to stop us from getting this thing.

TJ: And you also Mowbray?

All: He is also from Rondebosch, also climbed off at Mowbray Station.

RR: And we'll get paid as well when we finish with this.

TJ: She said you'll get paid?

RR: And she said we will get Methadone.

[?]: Everyone R500 each, we will get paid, because we didn't want to get on the bus.

TJ: And who's gonna pay you?

[?]: She said when we come here by the tent, when we leave here by the camp, here by where we are, each and every person will get R500.

TJ: And did you have any discussion with law enforcement?

[All]: They didn't want to speak to us. Beat us up.

IB: Even here when we say we have family to go to, they let us write our names down but nothing ever gets done.

IB: He's written his name down more than seven times. I don't have a reason to write my name down.

TJ: In Mowbray when you were collected, did you speak to any law enforcement?

[All]: No, you were there, remember you were there. They chased you guys away there.

IB: Can you remember, you and that other guy with the beard, he still showed us the pictures of Belville.

[All]: It looks the same like Belville. It looks worse.

IB: No, it looks different because that one in Belville had mattresses, um, beds and the people are living much better. The pictures, the way you guys showed it, ok you guys talked and you told us, it's not going to be what you think it is.

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[All]: But Ingrid made different promises.

### **STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEW 2**

Human Rights Monitoring Mission

Interview 2

Sunday, April 12 2020

Time: 15:09

Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins (TJ)

Interviewee: Carlos Maspica (CM)

CM: Carlos Maspica (sp.), I think it's imperative that we have some contact with the disaster risk management team on the outside. In the evening there is absolutely no security guard or law enforcement officer on the premises as such, they are all on the outside parameters of the gate and the fencing. And so when you have emergencies like we had last night, we had no way of contacting disaster risk management, and it's by sheer luck that we actually got hold of somebody yesterday. So, there has to be a means of contacting disaster risk management. We need to have either security or medical assistance or some way of contacting disaster risk management or an ambulance should something happen at the camp. At the moment where the people get violent, where the people get upset, where the people get sick, we've got no way of actually contacting anybody. It took us over an hour and half to get medical assistance to a guy that was having a seizure last night.

So, it's imperative.

TJ: What's your name?

CM: Carlos Maspica (sp).

TJ: And which area are you from?

CM: Cape Town.

### **STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEW 3**

Human Rights Monitoring Mission

Interview 3

Sunday 12 April 2020

Time: 3.50PM

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Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins (TJ)

Main Interviewee: Mrs Swartz

Secondary Interviewee: Mr Swartz

[Husband and wife, introduced themselves as Mr and Mrs Swartz]

We are from Gordons Bay, we staying at the Spur in Gordons Bay, the owners gave us permission to stay there. Ok. When the lockdown came down, we tried to get to our family in Paarl. Gordon's Bay Police station said that it's got nothing to do with them. My husband was walking the street to go to his gran, to see if we can go and stay there, he got hit. Ok? When the bus came to collect us, they said we have to get on the bus or its Pollsmoor. So we said what are the conditions? Here we were promised to get 3 decent meals a day, a mattress to sleep on, a blanket, toiletries and a food parcel. This is what we have received. My husband has got an illness, he needs five meals a day.

TJ: What is it?

[husband]: *audio indecipherable*

[wife] He is receiving 3 meals a day.

His finger is damaged. He needs pain pills. We have been asking now for three days. Nothing has happened. Absolutely nothing.

The toilets are in a devastating state and so are the showers.

TJ: And at night?

[wife]: At night we all sleep here. And its gang violence. Violence I don't mind, we can handle that. But the sanity, the filthiness. This is how we sleep at night.

[husband]: the one meter is not even a consideration. If this one has a virus, that one will get it and that one will get it...

[wife]: If someone gets ill...

TJ: Have you been tested?

[wife]: no, none of us has been tested.

[husband]: that was the other promise that they told us before we get on the bus. They said they were going to test all of us. [end]

#### **STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEW 4**

Human Rights Monitoring Mission

Interview 4

Sunday : 12 April 2020

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Time: 16:02

Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins (TJ)

Main Interviewee: Bradley Meyer (BM)

My name, my name is Bradley. Ek is van die Strand. Mense het Law Enforcement en Securight het gekom darso by ons en vir ons gese daar sal n bus kom dan moet ons klim op die bus, hulle sal vir ons vat na n plek toe, daar wat ons al... alles, alles sal veilig is en hygenic sal beter is as wat ons daar sal kry. Ek het vir hulle gese maar ek het n address. Ek het n plek, ek het n ma, ek het broers en susters. Hulle het vir... Hulle het vir my gese ander woorde ek kan nie daarntoe gaan nie. Hoekom, da wat hulle vir, daar waar hulle n plek het daar is van alles hygenic and clean en vir die korinthia ( 'COVID 19") en vir die virus het die President vir ons n plek en alles sal daar gerieflik wees vir ons almal. So, ek het vir hulle gese nee ek wil nie gaan nie. Ek het my sakkies, my sak klere opgetel, ek het geloop. So het n kaptein van law enforcement vir my geforseer tot binne in die bus. Daarvandaan af het hulle... wil ek by die venster uitspring, het hulle my gekeer aan die eander kant. Daarvandaan af het die bus opgestart ek het gesit, toe wat ons hier kom het hulle net vir ons name gevat, hulle het nie eers vir ons gevra wat makeer nie, of ek siek is of wat is nie, het ek enige probleme nie, ek het net gese nee ek makeer niks ek wil huistoe gaan. So het hulle n foto gevat van my. Niks gescan vir die coronavirus nie. Deurgebring, toe het ons gestaan heel dag amper tot half vyf toe. Buitekant. Buitekant. Ingekom hier na die tent toe. Ons het hier gekom. Ons het nie eers kos gekry nie, ons het gevra vir kos, hulle het vir ons die aand hier by twaalfuur se kant toe bring hulle vir ons brood en botter. Daai was nie eers genoeg nie. Die mense hier, ons het nie eers komberse gehad nie. Niks matrasse nie, tot op vandag toe. Ons het, toe ons hier kom het ons maar net een kombersie gekry, agt snytjies brood, droog, ons het maar dit gaanvaar, hoekom ons is honger, ons is heeldag sonder kos. Ons het gaan le buitekant vir n hele vier vyf dae voordat ons ingekom het omdat die reen gekom het en moes ons ingegaan het, ons het nie n keuse gehad nie, ons het maar gebesluit ons gaan in. So ons het ingegaan, ons le maar nou nog, elkeen le soos so na as moontlik net om die spasio van mekaar te verbeter. Dit is maar al.

(TJ) What is your name?

(BM) My name is Bradley Meyer, I am from Strand.

### **English Translation :**

Bradley Meyer: 'My name, my name is Bradley. I'm from the Strand. People have Law Enforcement and [Unclear but it sounds like security guard] Securiright (security company) they said there will be a bus, then we have to get onto the bus, they will take us to a place, where everything will be safe and hygienic. A place where conditions will be better than what we had there where we were. I told them but I have an address.

I have a place, I have a mother, I have siblings. They told me ... They told me other words. They said I can't go there. Why?... then they said they have a place for us where is everything hygienic and clean and for the Corinthia (COVID 19... and because of the virus, the President gave us a place and everything will be convenient for all of us. So, I told them no I don't want to go. I picked up my bags, my bag of clothes, I walked on. So a law enforcement captain forced me to go inside the bus, from there they have... I wanted to jump out the window of the bus, they stopped me on the other side. From there the bus

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started, I then sat down in the bus, then when we got here, they just took our names, they didn't even ask us what was wrong, whether I was sick or whether I had any problems or anything. I just said no there is nothing wrong with me I want to go home. So they then took a picture of me. They never scanned for the coronavirus. Then we stood there all day almost until half-past five in the afternoon. Outside. Outside. Then we came here to the tent. We came here. We didn't even get food, we asked for food. They brought us here, at midnight that evening they brought us bread and butter. That wasn't even enough. The people here... we didn't even have blankets. Nothing... no mattresses, until this day. When we got here we only got one blanket, eight slices of bread, dry, we just accepted it. Why? Because we were hungry. We are without food all day. We were laying outside the tent for a whole four to five days before we came in. We came in because the rain was coming and we had to go in. We had no choice, we just decided we were going in. So we went in, we lay there, each one lying as close as possible just to improve the space [keep a decent space between people] between each other. That's all.'

TJ : 'What is your name?'

BM : 'My name is Bradley Meyer, I am from Strand.'

## **STRANDFONTEIN CAMP INTERVIEW 5**

Human Rights Monitoring Mission

Interview 5

Sunday 12 April 2020

Time: 4:20PM

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Interviewer: Tauriq Jenkins (TJ)  
Main Interviewee: David Africa  
Secondary Interviewee: John Solani (JS) (sp.)

[Man 1:] No soap, no toilet paper. You see sleeping on the floor with one blanket.

TJ: Where are you from?

[man 1] Kuilsriver

TJ: When law enforcement collected you, what did they tell you?

[man 1]: Tuesday, they said to me when the lockdown finished then we will come back to the Kuilsriver.

[man 2]: My thing is this, the time that they collected us, at that time, they came to us, and they said if we not going to pack our stuff, they gonna lock us up.

TJ: What is your name Sir?

[Man 2]: My name is David Africa (DA)

TJ: And you from?

DA: I'm from Kuilsriver. They gonna lock us up, we ask them or any query, what's it really about? They could say nothing at all, they just ... "If you don't take your stuff now, we gonna lock you up, and we gonna lock you up for 6 months". That's the thing that they said to us.

We been forced to set here. They didn't ask us, anything. And they said we are supplied with everything when we come here. Look now. People are dying here. They are fighting for food. People are escaping here now.

[Man 3]: Ya, daar is ene wat dood raak .

TJ: How long have you been here for?

[All]: Dinsdag.

[man 4]: Can I give you my tuppence worth? Just some basic things. There is no sanitizer.

TJ: What is your name sir?

[Man 4]: Sorry, my name is John Solani [JS](sp).

JS: There is no sanitizer at all here.

And first and foremost, they should at least explain to these people what the dos and

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don'ts are about the virus. Because a lot of the don't know. They don't keep the metre apart, they don't do all the basic things, as you can see by the bedding etc.

And I mean this really has become the breeding ground for the virus. It was supposed to be the exact opposite. But it has now become the breeding ground for the virus.

[ends]

## **C19 MONITOR REPORT OF COLLECTIONS IN MOWBRAY AND OBSERVATORY TO STRANDFONTEIN**

Monitor Report by Tauriq Jenkins

re: Mowbray and Observatory relocation of homeless to Strandfontein

7 April 2020

Mowbray:

The previous night, 06/04/20, homeless people in the Mowbray area were told to gather the next day at a centrally identified collection point next to the Mowbray train station and bus terminus.

This morning, 07/04/20, from around 8:30AM onward they gathered with bags and luggage at the place identified above.

Police vans, law enforcement and CID cars began arriving with other homeless people who joined the gathering. No social distancing protocols were observed or instructed.

No gloves, masks or hand sanitizers were apparent or used. The homeless people were told to get into the busses, as they loaded into the busses, no social distancing protocols were observed or instructions given to that effect by the security personnel present.

A CID social worker and manager were present at the scene and played a central role in 'briefing' the gathering of the homeless there about what to do.

One of our monitors was shouted at and threatened with arrest by police for sharing with the gathered crowd specific information regarding the site that the homeless were going to be relocated to. The information he shared included limited medical and psychological options, especially for dealing with withdrawal effects relating to substance use, now impacted by sales ban during lockdown; substance use is widespread among the homeless to help them cope on the streets.

The SAPS aggressively informed our monitor not to speak to the homeless people; threatening that should he want to say anything he would have to do so at the police station.

Later the CID social worker too told him not to speak to 'her people'.

Law enforcement officials later interrogated another monitor on site, demanded to see her permit and claiming it was invalid. She (our monitor) was also instructed in a hostile way to

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stop recording the events on her cell phone. She responded by stating her rights to do so and they walked off.

Observatory:

Streetbased people were gathered at the Village Green, by 1:15PM two busses, two SAPS vehicles and a vehicle from the CoCT's Displaced Persons Unit (DPU) arrived on Station Road Observatory next to Village Green.

Three streetbased people boarded the bus 'voluntarily'.

Most of the street based people present stated they wanted to 'go home' and did not want to get on to the bus. Verbal reports from a number of those who did board revealed they had been warned by DPU personnel that a bus would arrive tomorrow too and if they did not take the opportunity to go home by then, they would be nonetheless be taken to Strandfontein; should they refuse they would be taken to Pollsmoor prison and locked up.

My general concern is that orientation for relocation and information dispensed to the homeless is grossly insufficient to give any credibility to the notion of consent or voluntary relocation in the observed circumstances described above.

Being fully briefed and informed to make a decision is very different to being groomed into acquiescence through the promise of safer conditions, being well fed and looked after. For the homeless, there is no autonomy to make a decision freely in the face of a veiled threat and coercion, as well as in the context of the refrain or trope employed of 'no guarantee of what may happen after'. The strategies employed by city and state officials fail to empower towards an informed decision or choice involving one's life.

**The notion of 'voluntary' must be questioned at its deepest ethical level, so too the notion of consent.**

The relocation of the homeless from the cities and suburban areas to Strandfontein, as reports have confirmed, is not constructive, as the shelter provision is alleged to be an unsafe environment, yet the homeless are being told they are being relocated to a space they would be safe from C19.

The utopian conceit fed by the state to these most vulnerable people is deceptive both in its inaccuracy and application. The Strandfontein paradigm is a dystopian reality, built on very poor decision-making at the highest level. It shames us all in terms of the victim, the enforcer and the onlooker roles being imposed. Covid19 becomes secondary under such conditions because the way of handling a disaster situation is undignified and an indignity; it is a betrayal of the soul of our country's social contract and democratic values. This is not something we can or should agree to; unless a radical and humane approach is harnessed immediately, we will have failed to protect our most vulnerable people from this lethal health risk.

As communities, it is important to ensure that these 'camps' are stabilised towards humanitarian conditions; we cannot look on and watch homeless people and vulnerable



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others simply carted off into likely oblivion; the likely danger and uncertainty must compel us to act towards their real interests.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The site is in gross violation of national and international human rights and must be closed down with immediate effect. A careful and responsible repatriation process should follow. Recommended is the decentralising of the camp into other areas in smaller units. Repatriation and decentralising will require a process of an integrated and collaborative co-design with appropriate well vetted NGOs in the social and development sector, civics, health experts, disaster management, and civil society.