

THE PEOPLE SHALL PROTEST

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The authorities in the Mohokare local municipality have agreed to provisionally withdraw the court order granted by the Bloemfontein High Court against residents' protest actions last August.

The municipality agreed in principle to withdraw the court interdict that had barred residents of Zastron from participating in protest action in that town.

But they first want six months to assess the protests that took place in that town last July before they can make a concrete decision to withdraw the interdict. The court order that was granted stated that respondents (who were the community members) were not to do anything which directly or indirectly obstructs, impedes, destructs, postpones, delays or interferes with activities, business or works and duties of the (municipality)". The decision to review the court outcome came as a result of the intervention by the South African Human Rights Commission.

The commission was requested by the Zastron residents, who were also respondents in a case lodged by the municipality, to intervene. They said the interdict infringed on their constitutional right to freedom of expression and their right to protest.

"The community felt they were being barred from expressing their grievances and dissatisfaction with the general administration and governance of the (municipality) and its failure to deliver effective and efficient basic services to the community," the mediation report from commission read.

On the other hand, the municipality argued it obtained that interdict after several protests had spiralled out of control, resulting in the burning of some municipal buildings.

The chaos had also led to threats towards and intimidation of municipal officials, including the mayor.

But the decision to withdraw the interdict is based on the condition that a community meeting be held with ward councillors, the municipal council and the mayor to provide the community with feedback on issues including the reasons and purpose of the interdict.

The commission will also be observers at the meeting and assess the feedback session, the mediation report states.

As the final condition to cancel the interdict, the municipality demanded that "the dignity and safety of all municipal officials and staff must be respected".

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]