

Garikai Chaunza - Zimbabwe's High Court Stays House Demolitions, Thousands Already Homeless



Photo: www.newzimbabwe.com

fsrn.org. October 2014. In Zimbabwe, a court has ordered the government to halt a program of evictions and demolitions that has already rendered about three thousand families homeless. As the rainy season approaches, it's unclear if officials will appeal the decision. Garikai Chaunza reports.

The high court has ordered the government to stop demolishing homes in Harare and Chitungwiza, a bedroom community about fifteen miles southeast of the capital. In his ruling, Justice Nicholas Mathonsi said the demolitions were unlawful, adding that the action was a gross abuse of human rights.

The demolitions began in September, despite the country's recently-adopted constitution that guarantees every citizen the right to shelter. Residents say their homes were legally built, but officials claim otherwise.

"They demolished my house and all the property inside, beds, kitchen units and other household appliances," says Peter Makani, a 28-year-old father of two whose house in the Epworth area of Harare was razed. He told FSRN that police, "started firing the tear gas so that people could flee away before they demolish the houses." Makani says local council officials granted him a residential stand – or approval – to build his house in 2011, and he was surprised to see the same

authorities violently evicting his family.

The houses in question were built under electric cables or on areas reserved for recreational facilities and wetlands. Residents say elected officials with the two local authorities granted the land allocations when they were campaigning during last year's national elections.

Officials have not issued a public statement following the judgment.

Read more: <http://fsrn.org/thousands-already-homeless/>