

Construction mafia derailing projects worth billions

Yunus Bayat, a member of the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS), has called on the National Prosecuting Authority and local police services to intervene in what he describes as construction mafia and gang-related activities on construction project sites.



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Bayat has accused the Delangokubona Business Forum of being behind the violent intimidation experienced on sites: “The Delangokubona Business Forum continues to intimidate foremen, project managers and construction bosses by going onto project sites and demanding a stake in their projects. As professionals working on these projects, we cannot protect ourselves from this type of violent intimidation and we are no match for the AK-47 automatic weapons that they bring with them.”

According to the forum's general secretary Thulani Myeza, however, it has [not been involved in these alleged criminal acts](#), challenging its accusers to take up the matter with law enforcement.

Project disruptions

On 18 March 2019, the South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors (SAFCEC) issued an urgent plea for action from the minister of finance, Tito Mboweni. In the letter, the SAFCEC said that it is gravely concerned that construction projects worth a minimum of R25.5bn are being violently disrupted and halted in South Africa.

“Armed gangs demanded to be part of the R1.65bn Sanral Bridge Project in the Eastern Cape. These illegal site disruptions caused Aveng and the European-based Strabag International to pull out of the project, which forms part of the N2 Wild Coast Road Construction project,” says Bayat.

On Wednesday, 13 March 2019, a R2.4bn German oil storage investment project that is being constructed by WBHO in Saldanha, Western Cape, was halted after armed gangs arrived on site. “The gangs demanded to be part of the project and burned the properties to the ground. The pictures of the scene look like footage from a war zone. Again, police were called, but they only arrived hours later and said that the issue had to be handed over to the Paarl police station. Contractors, female engineers, and other staff had to run for their lives into the veld. The response from the South African Police Force simply isn’t good enough anymore,” he says.



MBSA calls on government to save construction sector from total collapse

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On Monday, 18 February, the Black Business Council in the Built Environment (BBCBE) issued a letter to minister General Bheki Cele from the Ministry of Police to request an appointment to discuss the illegal stoppages of construction projects across the country. In the letter, the BBCBE says that their members who are engaged in construction activity are subjected to victimisation and work stoppages on a daily basis due to local business forums demanding participation in projects.

“The ASAQS is calling on the National Prosecuting Authority and local police services to address the situation. A strong and solid intervention is needed, and it should be seen as a top priority for everyone in the built environment and government,” concludes Bayat.

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