

PRESS STATEMENT**16 May 2023****SERI CONDEMNS UNLAWFUL RAIDS AND WAR ON THE POOR BY CITY OF JOHANNESBURG'S ACTING MAYOR**

On Monday, 15 May 2023, the Acting Mayor of Johannesburg, Kenny Kunene and his team raided buildings in Johannesburg. During these unlawful raids, the team conducted searches, threatened to evict residents and were recorded demolishing one building in Windsor East all without any authorising court order. SERI is appalled by the recent actions and approach of the City of Johannesburg under the leadership of Acting Mayor which are targeted at poor people living in the inner city. At a time when the City is grappling with numerous challenges, it is disconcerting that the primary focus of the new Acting Mayor is to subject vulnerable communities to unconstitutional conduct that violate their fundamental rights to dignity and privacy.

Of utmost concern is the fact that these unlawful raids predominantly affect the same people who have previously endured victimisation under different mayoral regimes. In response to their suffering under former Mayor Herman Mashaba's tenure, the affected residents sought recourse from the Constitutional Court, culminating in the landmark decision in *Residents of Industry House and Others v Minister of Police and Others*. The court held that these raids "were conducted for an ulterior purpose, which is an abuse of power indicating wanton and calculated disregard of the law by the City and a predacious, mechanical scheme to terrorise and forcibly evict suspected unlawful occupiers, under the guise of restoring public order."

The court reaffirmed that the residents' rights to dignity and privacy are fundamental constitutional rights. Regrettably, despite the clear condemnation of these raids by the Constitutional Court, the City continues to undermine the court's judgment. This persistent disregard for court decisions poses a direct threat to the rule of law and erodes the integrity of our legal system.

SERI strongly condemns the conduct and attitude displayed by the City of Johannesburg towards its most impoverished residents. These residents already face the risk of eviction and are desperately awaiting adequate housing solutions from the City. We call upon the City to rectify its course and refrain from unlawful conduct. We also urge the City to urgently devise and implement a comprehensive housing strategy that addresses the needs and rights of its vulnerable residents.

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