

## Kicked Out for the Cup?

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South Africa is accused of clearing Cape Town slums to clean up for the big event. Victor Gumbi sits pensively beside a smoldering fire in a newly cleared lot, literally in the shadow of the recently renovated Ellis Park Stadium, one of the many venues where South Africa will host the World Cup football tournament, which kicks off this week. South Africa billed the world's most popular sporting event as a boon to development that would help lift millions out of poverty, but Gumbi, a 35-year-old day laborer, says things are only getting worse. Not long after South Africa was awarded the tournament, an entire city block in the neighborhood where he lives was slated for destruction as part of a larger urban-regeneration scheme around the stadium, as Johannesburg began preparing for the throngs of tourists expected to come pouring in over the next few weeks. Late last year, the run-down building where Gumbi was squatting was torn down, leaving him in a small, jerry-built shack in the middle of a block of half-demolished houses that local residents have nicknamed "Baghdad." Now many residents who'd been living in the area's abandoned buildings for well more than a decade feel they're being forced out because of the World Cup. "They want to hide us. They don't want the Europeans seeing the people living here, so they demolished these dirty houses," says Gumbi, who's convinced he'll be removed once and for all before the games actually begin.

Johannesburg city officials deny that any removals have taken place specifically for the tournament. Nevertheless, allegations of forced evictions for the World Cup have been sprouting up all over the country. Local headlines accuse South African police of rounding up the homeless and dumping them miles away (a charge the police deny), while residents from across Cape Town claim they've been relocated from their squatter settlements and dilapidated buildings to a temporary camp on the outskirts of town before the football fans arrive. In this case as well, the city dismisses such accusations, but it wouldn't be the first time people have been uprooted in advance of a global sporting event. When Seoul hosted the 1988 Olympics, an estimated 15 percent of the population was displaced as a result of the capital's overhaul. And 20 years later, it's thought that far more than a million residents in Beijing found themselves in the path of a bulldozer in the run-up to the 2008 summer games. Now a recent report on such mega-events by the United Nations' special rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, states that in many current cases human rights are going out the door as host cities, including Cape Town, are being cleaned up to appeal to spectators.

For South Africa, the first World Cup on African soil was supposed to be different. Initially heralded as an opportunity to raise standards of living for the country's roughly 25 million impoverished citizens, organizers laid out a development agenda for ensuring that benefits trickled down to the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Since then the country has invested more than \$4 billion in stadiums and upgrading its airports and other infrastructure. But in recent weeks government ministers have sought to play down expectations over its economic payoff, while commentators warn of being left with nothing but "white elephant" stadiums after the games end. For starters, the global recession has caused a dramatic reduction in the number of projected visitors, down nearly 25 percent to 373,000. And as the kickoff approaches, FIFA's demands for a commercial exclusion zone around the venues for its official sponsors such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola have come as a blow to thousands of South Africa's street traders, who say they're being pushed out for the

monthlong event. President Jacob Zuma has pleaded with South Africans not to air the country's problems in front of World Cup visitors, but with the opening match just days away, angry protests over evictions and substandard living conditions have flared up in many cities and squatter settlements.

Perhaps nowhere is that frustration more palpable than in Cape Town. Rolnik reports she received numerous complaints—more than anywhere else in South Africa—about residents being forced out for the World Cup and relocated more than 16 kilometers outside of town in a “temporary relocation area” known as Blikkiesdorp, or Tin Can Town. With Table Mountain as a backdrop, the sprawling, remote camp consists of about 1,700 identical metal huts on a wide plain of gravel surrounded by heavy concrete fencing. Housing-rights campaigners contend that plans to move people to these relocation areas, far from schools and job opportunities, are in violation of international human-rights standards, and newcomers complain of ill treatment by the police and freezing temperatures. “Why couldn't they have put us somewhere else instead of here?” asks Francisco Green, whose family had just been relocated from a hostel they'd been squatting in near Cape Town's newly refurbished practice stadium. “It was much better where we lived. We're going to go through our first winter, and I think it's going to be a disaster.”

Several miles away from Blikkiesdorp is the most prominent example of forced evictions cited in the U.N. report: a vast conglomeration of shacks known as the Joe Slovo informal settlement (named after the anti-apartheid activist and former housing minister). The settlement lines the highway between Cape Town and the city's international airport, making it one of the first sites greeting incoming visitors. Because of its high visibility, it was targeted for a national pilot project shortly after the country was awarded the World Cup in 2004. The project would have completely razed the shacks and moved as many as 20,000 people to a temporary camp to make way for new, more attractive housing. Critics say the project was nothing more than an attempt to beautify the city for 2010, and angry residents last year won a Constitutional Court ruling that imposed such costly conditions on the eviction order that the government dropped the plan to move them, but only after several thousand people had already been evicted.

It's not clear how many of the recent evictions would have taken place even if the World Cup had never come to South Africa. When the African National Congress came to power with Nelson Mandela as president in 1994, it promised to build a free house for virtually everyone living below the poverty line as a means of redressing the effects of apartheid, which essentially restricted nonwhites from owning property and living in cities. In practice, this new government housing has only pushed many poor blacks from urban centers to low-income ghettos miles outside of town. Now, with a mounting backlog and limited funding, the program that began by building actual homes is often reduced to warehousing people in rural transit camps, some far worse than Blikkiesdorp. Rhodes University professor Richard Pithouse says that there are currently 100 court cases challenging evictions in Durban, and that none of them can be connected to the World Cup, although the link has been made in the press. “This idea that mega-events lead to evictions has become very popular,” says Pithouse. “This is very worrying because people were being evicted long before we got the World Cup, and they will be evicted for a long time afterward.”

Critics say that political leaders in many emerging economies see no place for the poor in their vision of “world-class” cities, the kind fit to host major international events. Illustrating this, Marie Huchzermeyer of the University of Witwatersrand says South Africa is misinterpreting the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goal for improving the lives of slum dwellers. The U.N. meant to encourage nations to bring services like

water and electricity to informal settlements, but South Africa took this as a mandate for “eradicating slums”—a phrase recently used by Zuma’s new minister of human settlements, Tokyo Sexwale. The country has set a target for slum-free cities by 2014, and Huchzermeyer says its approach is being mimicked from Morocco to Angola and Zimbabwe. That’s a troubling prospect for a continent in which the majority of the urban population lives in slums.

Rolnik warns that as more developing countries vie to host global sporting events, the greater the risk that slum-clearance campaigns will become more aggressive. The 2010 Commonwealth Games will be hosted in Delhi, where Rolnik’s predecessor, Miloon Kothari, reported that 300,000 people have been removed to make the city “slum-free” by the opening ceremony later this fall. The 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics will take place in Brazil, where Rolnik reports that 35 “informal communities” already face eviction for the event, and this in a vibrant democracy with a long history of recognizing the rights of “informal settlers.” Rolnik says the International Olympic Committee did cooperate with the U.N. report, and agreed to begin including protections against evictions in its bidding process. FIFA, says Rolnik, never responded to repeated U.N. requests over several years for information. FIFA told NEWSWEEK that it “never requested any move or ‘cleaning-up’ of areas in any host city” for this year’s World Cup. However, it’s also unclear whether it has done anything to prevent it.

For people like Victor Gumbi in Johannesburg and those still living in the Joe Slovo informal settlement in Cape Town, such as 64-year-old Nonqaba Lujalajala, the threat of the World Cup has felt very real. Lujalajala built her diminutive shack in Joe Slovo shortly after the fall of apartheid, a time filled with pride and optimism for the future. Today, 16 years later, she says she’s glad football fans from all over the world will be confronted with the reality of her situation on their way to the games. “I’m still starving here,” she says, and now visitors will see South Africa as it really is, not how some of its leaders had hoped it would appear.

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