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DIVERSE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES, POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIC GROUPS UNITE TO BLOCK CITY OF CAPE TOWN LAND AUCTION, CITING “NEOCOLONIAL” LAND GRAB

CAPE TOWN – A broad coalition of community organisations, indigenous and traditional councils, political parties, and civic movements, from across a wide spectrum of civil society entities across the country, has come together to vehemently oppose the City of Cape Town’s impending auction of public land, scheduled for 26 February 2026. Describing the sale as a “slap in the face” to the poor and landless, the groups are launching an urgent legal challenge and planning a mass mobilisation to halt the disposals.

The group argues that the auctioning of valuable public assets prioritises wealthy private developers over the constitutional right to housing and dignity. They contend that this represents a form of neocolonialism, denying black and indigenous people access to land while reinforcing historical patterns of exclusion.

“We, the people of South Africa from all walks of life, united in our diversity, oppose this auction because it will further harm those who were dispossessed and displaced during colonial conquest and apartheid, and benefit those with money and power. We oppose the sale of these lands and properties, and condemn the sale as a second District Six removal,” said the coalition.

“This is nothing but a slap in the face to communities that are yearning for land, housing, and dignity. Instead of using this land to address our massive housing backlog and provide social amenities, the City is selling it off to the highest bidder.”

A Crisis of Democratic Process

The proposed auction proceeds in the absence of meaningful public participation. Consultation cannot be reduced to procedural compliance. It must be accessible, inclusive, responsive, and capable of shaping outcomes.

Public land is not surplus stock. It is one of the last remaining instruments available to address the enduring violence of apartheid spatial planning – a system of practice conceived by the colonial Dutch and British and engineered into policy under the National Party that forcibly removed communities, segregated opportunity, and entrenched generational inequality. Land in Cape Town holds the memory of genocide, dispossession, and the ongoing epistemic trauma and violence against the living descendants of the |Xam and Khoena peoples.

Cape Town remains one of the most spatially unequal cities in the world. The daily commute from the periphery to economic centres, the overcrowded informal settlements, the persistent land hunger. These are not accidents: they are the living architecture of apartheid, still embedded in land ownership and urban design.

To dispose of public land without first exhausting its potential for social housing, restitution, affordable housing, and community infrastructure is to perpetuate that injustice.

Furthermore, when involving Indigenous communities, principles of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) must be adhered to.

Procedural Failures and Legal Challenge

At the core of the opposition is a fundamental failure in the public participation process. Community leaders and public officials within the coalition assert that affected communities were not adequately informed of the sales, rendering the process invalid under Section 14 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and municipal asset transfer regulations. It is alleged that the City has centralised disposal functions, removing oversight from sub-councils and effectively dismantling any meaningful community engagement.

“The Public Participation Process has not been dealt with adequately because communities were not even aware of these sales. This is a failure on the part of government,” the coalition stated.

“This sale would affect millions of poor Black, Indigenous and so-called ‘Coloured’ communities who remain homeless, backyard dwellers and shack dwellers in the City of Cape Town, as well as negatively affect cultural activities, spiritual connections to heritage sites and land in the City. The City of Cape Town must be an inclusive city that accommodates all people from all walks of life. Instead, the City of

Cape Town must hand these pockets of land to communities, so that we can develop the land for the benefit of the poor and working class.”

An urgent interdict was brought before the Cape Town High Court by the Southern African Aboriginal Congress on 12 February 2026. The application was dismissed however with the merits intact. Currently an Application for Leave To Appeal is in process. The coalition will aim to secure an interdict to preserve the land while broader legal, social and political claims are advanced.

Mass Mobilisation on 24 February

In a show of unified defiance, the diverse, broad-based, intersectional coalition is calling for a mass mobilisation on **Tuesday, 24 February, 8.30am at the Good Hope Centre** – two days before the auction. There is a call-out to everyone to come in their thousands and join the protest, to demonstrate the depth of public outrage. They are demanding that all planned auctions be halted immediately and that land be repurposed for community needs such as social housing and other uses.

“The City has a responsibility to act in the interest of the public, not private landowners and developers. We will not stand idly by while our land is stolen from under us,” the coalition added.

***Only together we defend, only united we overcome!
United in our diversity against inequality, injustice and colonialism.***

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