



6th Floor, Khotso House, 62 Marshall Street, Johannesburg, 2001

P.O Box 62098, Marshalltown, 2107

Tel: 011 833 1190, Fax: 011 833 1076,

Email: info@esset.org.za

26 March 2010

Media Statement

Informal traders at Park Station fall victims of 'beautification and gentrification processes'

The Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET), an independent ecumenical organisation that works for social and economic justice is very disappointed at the decision taken to evict informal traders at Park Station.

About 28 informal traders who peddle at Park Station were forced to vacate their trading sites on Human Rights Day after being given eviction notices by Intersite Property Management, a company that leases rentals to informal traders in train stations such as Johannesburg and Cape Town. The eviction notice forcing the traders to vacate their trading sites was to allow Coke to renovate the park station. The letter informed them that they were to come back to the station on the 1 of May 2010. Upon their return, their rentals will have gone up to R 1500 from R570 per month. They will be required to pay 2 months deposit and a leasing fee of R 100. In total, they are expected to pay R 4600 on the 1st of May 2010, having stayed at home for 6 weeks. Most of these are struggling women who support large families. When they enquired about the increase in the rentals, they were told that there are many other people who are willing to pay that amount. They believe these ridiculous amounts are just a ploy to chase them out of the station as millions of people are expected to fill up the station during the World Cup.

Days before the eviction date, the traders negotiated with Intersite Management to organise an alternative location for them. They were told by Intersite Management that Coke is a big company and will not have a problem organising a tent for them. However on the 12th of March 2010, they were told that there were not going to be given tents. They were also not allowed to pitch up their own tents to ensure that they can make a living for their families. Instead, they were told in no uncertain terms that they were to vacate the park station at 6 o'clock on the 21st of March. Indeed at 15h30 on Sunday the 21st March 2010, the electricity at Park Station in their shops was switched off. It was ironic that on this day the owners of 28 small businesses at Park Station were mourning and not celebrating the day which has been set aside to remind the nation that never again will any South African be denied their human

rights. According to the traders, they were mourning ill treatment, humiliation marginalisation met at them by Intersite and government.

It is interesting that at the meeting that took place on the 23 March 2010 between the South African Informal Traders Forum representatives and Intersite Management, the Gauteng Regional Manager of Intersite, Ms Nomafu Buthelesi emphasized that her company was not aware that the informal traders were having burning issues in relation with rental logistics. Ms Buthelesi elaborate: "As management of Intersite, we usually invite Traders and Trader organisations that have lease agreements with us to meetings when there is developments in Park Station such as renovations, upgrading, rental increases etc. The renovation of Park Station was inevitable especially with the World Cup coming to South Africa With regard to the rental increase after the renovations, the traders has not disputed that the rentals are too much or that they will not be able to afford it".

However, it is bemusing that the Regional General Manager does not find it strange that the traders do not have a problem with the soaring rental increases and that they would easily be able to pay up. She also failed to disclose to both the informal traders and the Forum that the Park Station will be one of the Controlled Access Site during the 2010 FIFA World cup. Apparently, the purpose of the designation of Access control Sites is to regulate business activities on match days. In addition, no person shall be allowed to conduct business on Controlled Access Sites during match days without the written approval of the City of Johannesburg acting in consultation with FIFA and the Local Organising Committee.

Issued by Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET)

Tel: 011 833 1190

Fax: 011 833 1076