

# **"I'm not an ANC. I'm an ordinary person. But the IFP is attacking us and the police are not protecting us"**

Later in the afternoon, residents set alight a house on the corner from which the hostel dwellers were firing.

Hector Moekena stood watching his mother's house go up in flames. "We were forced to move out of there on Tuesday by the people from the hostel. But we cannot blame the comrades (for setting the house alight). We blame those people that chased us out and moved in."

At dusk, many of the people holed up in the shacks and houses began to cross back to Madala Hostel.

The Casspirs formed a barricade at

the intersection between the men and the rest of the residents to allow the hostel dwellers and women carrying large bundles of bedding and other goods to cross to the safety of the hostel.

The crowds booed angrily at what they saw as a blatant display of police partiality. "See, they are moving to the hostel and the police are protecting them. But where are they when we need protection?" a resident said.

Others cried angrily that their own possessions were being moved from their now-Inkatha occupied houses

into the hostel.

People began to move nearer to the Casspirs and the intersection. Some approached one of the Casspirs and asked police inside why they had blocked the road to protect the Inkatha people and why they themselves were not given protection.

One policeman replied that they had parked there to wait for the firemen to come and douse the flames of the burning house.

Shortly afterwards, as dusk began to fall, the Casspirs pulled to the side of the intersection near the hostel. The residents who had approached the Casspirs grew scared when the Casspirs withdrew, realising they were standing in the middle of the war zone with no buffer. Several people however, continued to stand on the corner, not far from the hostel.

Suddenly there was burst of gunfire from the direction of the hostel and two men who had been standing near the corner fell. Both had been shot in the head and died instantly.

One of the men, whose head was virtually blown off, had been standing next to me a few moments before at the Casspir. He had spoken to me and to the police. He had asked angrily why the police offered no protection and why they had done nothing to rout out the people hiding in the Zozo cabins.

Another man, shot in the legs, was rapidly picked up and rushed to safety. Police jumped out of the Casspirs, brandishing heavy arms, then quickly strapped the bodies on to stretchers and dumped them inside.

Some of the comrades came running to the scene with guns behind their backs, mere inches from the police. Stunned at what they had seen, people simply stood there, frightened and angry. Armed residents began to return gunfire and sporadic shooting continued into the night.

Though people were returning to work on Thursday morning, men still thronged around the houses on Third Avenue, awaiting more gunfire from

the direction of the hostel. They were locked in a war they said would never end. So far at least 10 people had died, including a seven-year-old.

Two men told how they had been staying in the hostel until the end of last year. "I've been staying in the hostel since 1972," said Peter Mashatola. But I moved out last year because the security forces bought Inkatha from Natal to move in. The IFP were not here before."

Many people — mostly women and children — have sought refuge at the local Presbyterian church and the Sankopano recreational centre.

Petunia Sathekge (24) told how she had been staying at the church for the past two weeks. Her home, opposite the hostel in Third Avenue, is in the area now occupied by Inkatha.

"They took my uncle's place and we decided to leave because our house is in the same yard. They broke our windows and took our clothes and money. See, that's why I am only eating *amasi* and no meat. They took my granny's money."

Sathekge, with a gash on her forehead sustained when fleeing teargas fired at marching residents the previous week, said she and the rest of her family had been forced to join Inkatha and buy IFP cards costing R5.

"I'm not ANC. I'm an ordinary person," she said emphatically. "But the IFP is attacking us and the police are not protecting us."

Many tired residents, who have barely slept since raging gun battles broke out early this week, returned to work on Thursday morning ferried by taxis swerving around barricades, restoring some sense of normality to the chaotic, war-ravaged township.

But most streets were still heavily barricaded with rocks, trees and burnt out cars and many armed residents still thronged Third Avenue, waiting tensely for renewed firing to come from the Inkatha hideout.

One man, a gun in his pocket, stood on a corner with his wife and baby, waiting for their lift to arrive. He, like many other men, wasn't going anywhere. "They are still fighting there and I cannot leave to go to work. My house is near the corner up there. They'll burn my things." The man said he had been engaged in running battles since early in the week and had not slept since Monday.

"What are they fighting for? I don't know," he shrugged.

W/ Mail

374/92