Thousands left homeless as Zimbabwe police demolish homes in winter

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http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/11759414/Thousands-left-homeless-as-Zimbabwe-police-demolish-homes-in-winter.html

[Zimbabwe](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/) police are leaving many people without shelter in the middle of winter after Harare city council said it will demolish homes in so-called "undesignated areas".

Michael Chideme, Harare city spokesman, said at least 19 illegal settlements dotted around the city would be demolished.

“We have identified all the areas with illegal structures in Harare and we have informed all the people who are in these areas that they should pull down their structures, failure of which will mean the council will do it for them,” he said.

So far about 200 homes were demolished in the last two days in several poor suburbs about 10 to 15 miles west of Harare along the main road to second city, Bulawayo.

Michael Guvamatanga, 50, married with three children, was stammering with shock and anxiety as he staggered around the rubble of the home he began building two years ago. “I am trying to save some building materials,” he said.

Mr Guvamatanga said he was finishing some tiling when city council workers and policeman arrived and ordered him outside and began smashing down his home in Harare’s peri urban, Westlea suburb.

“I was nearly finished building this house, and now I lost my life savings when they broke it. it was my pension,” he said and turned away, close to tears.

He lost his job with a chemical factory last year and has been unemployed since then.

Ten years ago [president Robert Mugabe](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/senegal/11668263/The-ageing-world-leaders-who-just-cant-let-go-in-pictures.html)’s security forces [smashed down tens of thousands of homes and small businesses](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/1491501/Mugabes-bulldozers-push-people-back-to-land.html), mostly around Harare, in a campaign called ‘Clean out the Trash.”

Analysts said at the time the campaign organised by Mr Mugabe’s officials was intended to disrupt support for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party which at that time had majority support in most urban areas.

The devastation attracted condemnation from the United Nations human settlements division.

Mr Guvamatanga said he bought his small piece of land ahead of 2013 elections for £3,500 from a Zanu PF aligned “co operative” which operated out of city council buildings in central Harare.

Zanu PF won a massive victory in disputed elections that year and for the first time won several seats in Harare.

Obert Gutu, spokesman for the MDC said: “Zanu PF land barons illegally sold city council land to poor people and they built homes without any plans. Some of these homes are constructed over sewage pipes or on wet lands.”

While the MDC still has a majority of elected councillors in Harare, they said staff members, who support, or fear, Mr Mugabe’s Zanu PF party regularly ignore council decisions.

Recently appointed local government minister Saviour Kasukuwere, who is also national commissar for Zanu PF, said he would check on the demolitions and address the city council late on Thursday.