



Balfour protesters calm down

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Balfour - Balfour's Siyathemba informal settlement was "quiet" at midday on Wednesday following three days of protests which ended with a library being burnt and at least 32 arrests.

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"Now, the things are very cool. I can see smoke here and there, but there is nothing so serious that is reported," said Sergeant Sam Tshabalala.

There were piles of burning tyres and groups of people walking around, but no problems, he said.

Public violence

Fourteen of the 22 people arrested for public violence earlier this week were granted bail when they appeared in the Balfour Magistrate's Court, police said.

"They were granted bail of R500 each," said Tshabalala.

Four of the remaining eight cases were withdrawn, and four minors were referred for diversion programmes under the supervision of social workers.

Reports on their programmes would be presented to the court when they returned with the rest of the group on March 18.

Nine South Africans arrested during protests on Tuesday would face initial charges of public violence when they appeared in court on Thursday.

An Ethiopian was also arrested on Tuesday for assault.

Tshabalala said police were investigating whether these people arrested would be linked to crimes such as malicious damage to property and damage to a state vehicle.

At first they said it was because the local Burnstone Mine was not employing enough people from the community, but protesters later said they also wanted the removal of the town's Mayor Lefty Tsotetsi.

Promises not honoured

The DA's chief whip in the province, Velly Manzini, condemned the protests and blamed the ANC for not honouring its promises.

"Balfour residents should not destroy their own properties by setting buildings alight."

"It is almost nine months to go for the 2011 local government elections and that is where true anger can be shown by making a well informed cross." Dr Udesch Pillay, head of the research centre for

service delivery at the Human Sciences Research Council, said the protests showed that the "chickens have now come home to roost".

"These new dimensions include demands for employment, calling President Zuma to task for promises on service delivery made to the Siyathemba community, and the broader aspect of government spending on the 2010 FIFA World Cup, severely limiting capacity to spend on service delivery," he said.

- SAPA