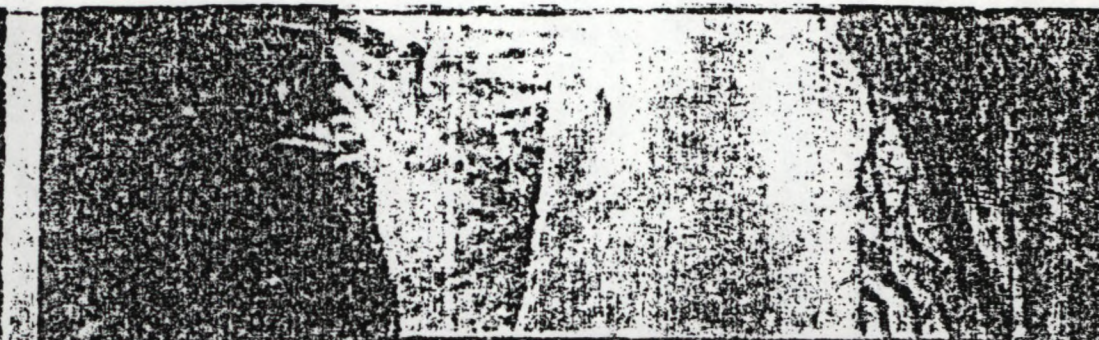


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TEARSMOKE — It was three days of unrest for Soweto and tears and smoke were the toll. These two youths in Meadowlands hold handkerchiefs to their faces as the fumes take on all and sundry. This was one of the many scenes in Soweto this week.

Freezing of rents

By SAM MABE

TUW mayor of Lekoa Town Council, Mr Esau Mahlatsi, yesterday emerged from hiding to announce the freezing of rent increases in the area and vowed that he was not going to resign.

Addressing a Press conference at the council offices near Sebokeng, Mr Mahlatsi denied that he was living in fear of his life. He said he was going to remain in the council until asked to resign by the people who had elected him.

He said the unrest in the Vaal was caused by several thousand people who came to the area from outside in buses.

Although he would not say where the people came from, he said they arrived the night before and the morning of the unrest. In the Vaal, he said only three percent of the total population of 400 000 had participated in the unrest.

Mr Mahlatsi warned that the freezing of the R5.50 and R5.90 increases would result in the deterioration of the standard of services provided for residents.

He hoped that the freezing of the rent increases would bring an end to the unrests.

Speaking to The SOWETAN after the conference, Mr Mahlatsi said it was only through God's will that he had survived an attack by a mob of 800 stone-throwing youths.

He said the youths came in two groups, while he was at his home at about 8.30am.

"I went out of the house, faced about 400 youths and they had come for me. I did not do anything. I could not stand there treating when the youths were attacking me."

At one stage he was retreating with many of the stones landing on his body. I saw another group of about 400 coming from behind and I don't know how I managed to escape," he said.

He said his council's mandate to run the townships of Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong and Zamdela was still valid and he did not see the unrests as the residents' way of passing a vote of no confidence in his council.

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