



AZAPO

AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

TO: ALL MEDIA HOUSES FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: AZAPO EASTERN CAPE SECRETARY FOR PUBLICITY & INFORMATION

DATE: 9 January, 2025

SUBJECT: AZAPO EASTERN CAPE REJECTS THE PLANS TO DEMOLISH VICTORIA GROUNDS

The Azanian Peoples Organization is appalled by the continued assault to the legacy of Steve Biko even in death by the Buffalo City Municipality and its business cronies. When the founder and father of Black consciousness movement was brutally murdered on the 12 September 1977 by a cold hearted apartheid era government, the then King Williams Town Borough Council during the period of racial segregation allowed for the burial of Steve Biko to be held at the Victoria grounds on the 25 September 1977.

On the 7 September 1992 a mass democratic led campaign against an autocratic and illegitimate Ciskei government assembled at the same Victoria grounds and marched to Bhisho where more than 28 marchers were killed and many injured. The mass funeral was to be held at the same Victoria grounds and a mass grave is in Ginsberg old cemetery. Victoria grounds is an important landmark with rich cultural and historical value qualifying it to be a heritage site. Sites of historical importance in their nature are protected through the Heritage management resources Act. One wonders why South African Heritage Resources Agency and Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority are not defending Victoria grounds. It is a shame that a democratic government would be at the centre in erasing a site that could add a lot of value in saving the soul of our nation and in contributing meaningfully in the decolonisation of our education system and transformation of our heritage space. Victoria Grounds Stadium brought business to the local area, including hospitality services, street vendors, and tourism-related activities. If the stadium's closure may reduce traffic costs and accommodates those who cannot able to drive their own transport and revenue for local businesses, further impacting an economy that relies on sporting events and gatherings.

AZAPO in the Eastern Cape believes that Victoria Grounds Stadium has been a vital sporting and recreational hub for the local community, especially for fans of soccer and rugby. And many sport activities. Its closure means the loss of a space for both recreational and competitive sports. This could result in fewer opportunities for local youth to engage in sports, potentially leading to an increase in social issues linked to lack of recreational activities.

AZAPO in the Eastern Cape see the matter of Victoria Grounds as similar to the destruction of Mthatha Stadium where we saw a demolition of a historical sports facility for commercial shopping mall which literally killed football in our province and we are still licking our wounds after the Eastern Cape Glad Africa Bizana Pondo Chiefs had to relocate to KwaZulu-Natal as there were no proper amenities in our province except for those in Gqeberha. Our country is founded on democratic principles and, as far back as 1954, Robert Sobukwe made a clarion call "that we speak the truth before we die". So it is within our constitutional and democratic rights to vent our anger when our own government reneges on its obligations of consulting its citizenry.

AZAPO in the Eastern Cape believes that the Bhisho Massacre Precinct adjacent to the university of Fort Hare and the provincial legislature present many opportunities for development that will fulfil the Bhisho revitalisation project. Commercialisation should not be at the expense of our sports traditions.

END

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