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Give us proper houses, residents beg provincial government

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RESIDENTS from the Jika Joe informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg have called for the provincial government to build them proper housing.

This comes after a number of people were left homeless when a blaze destroyed more than 100 shacks on Saturday night, affecting 164 people.

Resident Phlisiwe Zulu said almost all those affected were left with nothing, as all their belongings were destroyed in the fire.

She said shacks got burnt down often in the informal settlement, adding that residents were asking government for help.

"The sad part is that the government knows about the situation



Peggy Nkonyeni

and yet they're ignoring us. All we have been asking for is to be relocated to other areas, where we can build our houses, or at least be provided with houses like RDPs.

"We lost everything we had. I didn't even manage to take my

clothes or a blanket. Some people did manage to grab their things, but others were left with only the clothes on their backs. The fire was too much and we didn't know what to do.

"Our clothes, school uniforms for kids, beds and TVs were destroyed right in front of our eyes.

"I'd already bought things for my kids for Christmas, but everything was burnt. We haven't been told what is going to happen to us, but we know that we can't be staying in a community hall for too long," said Zulu.

When The Mercury visited the area, some residents had already started rebuilding their shacks, but were stopped by the municipality officials.

Thuli Gumede, who had been living in the area for more than 20

years, said they had been asking for houses for years.

"We don't know when we'll be getting help and from whom. I know that some have been living here for too long and don't want to move, but as the community, we know that staying here is not safe at all," said Gumede.

Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs acting MEC, Peggy Nkonyeni, who visited the community, said they would be looking for another area where they would relocate the victims.

"We will be discussing with the municipality about the short- and long-term solutions for the community.

"We will also put law enforcement in place to make sure no one goes back to rebuild in that spot," said Nkonyeni.