

TITLE: Inquiry hears why gaining access into Usindiso was difficult on day of fire

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## Article Summary

An inquiry into a deadly fire at the Usindiso building in Johannesburg heard testimony from acting Johannesburg emergency management services (EMS) chief Rapulane Monageng. Monageng revealed that the building had only one accessible door, as the other routes were blocked or sealed off. The building also lacked fire extinguishers and fire hoses, and some staircases were converted into rooms. Monageng's testimony included images showing the poor conditions inside the building. The inquiry aims to determine the cause of the fire and address the issue of hijacked buildings in Johannesburg.

## Article Analysis

1. Does the article give a political economy contextual analysis of the event?

The article does not explicitly provide a political economy contextual analysis of the event. It focuses more on the conditions and lack of safety measures in the hijacked building.

2. What according to the article, is/are the root cause/s of the event?

According to the article, the root cause of the event was the hijacking of the building by illegal landlords who charged residents high rents without providing basic services.

3. Does the article present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building?

The article does not provide evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organized criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building.

4. Does the article present evidence of NGOs (like SERI) engaging with organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building, on behalf of and in the interests of their clients (i.e. the tenants)?

The article does not present evidence of NGOs like SERI engaging with organized criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building on behalf of the tenants.

5. Does the article present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum?

The article does not present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum in terms of law enforcement, economic development/social upliftment, the provision of alternative accommodation, and the tenants' 'right to the city'

6. Does the article emphasise the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI (and other NGOs) regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act?

The article mentions a conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act. However, it does not emphasize this conflictual relationship.

## Critical Analysis

The article titled "Inquiry hears why gaining access into Usindiso was difficult on day of fire" by Khanyisile Ngcobo reports on the testimony of acting Johannesburg emergency management services (EMS) chief Rapulane Monageng at a commission of inquiry into a fire in a hijacked building that killed 77 people.

In terms of writing style, the article is straightforward and factual. The author presents information in a concise manner, focusing on the details provided by Monageng during his testimony. The article does not appear to contain any subjective language or biases.

However, it is worth noting that the article emphasizes the lack of safety measures and the poor conditions in the building, which may evoke a negative perception of the landlords and the situation. The author uses descriptive language to highlight the severity of the conditions, such as "gutted," "blocked," "makeshift," "unsafe," and "corroded". While these descriptions accurately reflect the information provided by Monageng, they could be seen as using subjective language to influence the reader's opinion.

Overall, the article seems relatively unbiased, but the focus on the poor conditions of the building may give the impression that the blame lies with the landlords and highlight the need for regulation of hijacked buildings.

## Contradiction Analysis

1. In the article, it is stated that "only one door at the now-gutted Usindiso building could be used to gain access," but later on, it mentions that "all but one door had remained accessible to residents". These two statements seem contradictory as they suggest different levels of accessibility to the building.

2. The article mentions that the building had "no fire extinguishers or fire hoses," but later on, it states that "fire hoses were either removed or converted for domestic use". These statements seem contradictory as one indicates a lack of fire equipment while the other suggests the presence of fire hoses that were repurposed.
  
3. The article states that "even some of the staircases were blocked and converted into makeshift rooms," implying that the staircases were inaccessible. However, it also mentions that firefighters had to use a universal key to force access to the emergency door on the fourth floor. This raises a contradiction in terms of the accessibility of the staircases.
  
4. The article mentions that the building was owned by the City of Johannesburg and served as a shelter for abused women and children, but it was taken over by illegal landlords who charged residents for accommodation. This suggests a contradiction in terms of the ownership and purpose of the building.

These examples highlight potential contradictions within the news article that could be explored or clarified for a more objective and accurate representation of the situation.