

NEWS

"Carl Rogers: The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change"

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Following protests over crippling teacher shortages at schools in Port Elizabeth's northern areas, which saw parents shut their doors this week, a prominent ANC member of the provincial legislature (MLA) has opened a criminal case against a department run by his party.

ANC MP, Christian Martin, a former MEC of public works and chairperson of the social development portfolio committee in the Eastern Cape legislature, opened a case of hindrance at the Cape Town's Robert Sturton on Wednesday against the education department - after a week of no education at 56 schools.

On Friday, Martin told City Press: "Yes, I did by a change against the department. The schools were closed by principals and school governing body members."

"On numerous occasions I went to the department and told them they must do something about the situation. After many meetings, I decided to open a case

PE schools remain closed

against the department for their inaction in reopening the schools, and to deal with their officials."

Martin said access to free basic and quality education was a top priority for the ANC, and the situation in northern areas compromised this very principle.

Police spokesperson Priscilla Mathu confirmed Gwalandu police were investigating a case of hindrance against the department. She said the schools had been closed since Monday.

"Police are investigating the situation, the schools are still closed. We do not want anyone to get harassed. Extra police have been deployed just for the situation there with the schools," said Ndlovu.

Teacher shortages in the northern areas have been a



Christian Martin

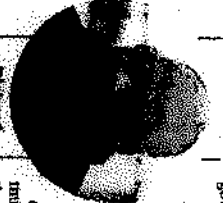
persistent problem for at least five years.

Richard Drael, secretary of the Northern Areas Education Forum (NAEF), said the community no longer trusted the education department.

"Parents have decided to keep their children at home because of the promises that were not forthcoming from the department for five years and more. Every year you sit with the same problem, so the people do not trust the department. That is the biggest challenge we have," said Drael.

He hoped ongoing discussions between the NAEF, Nelson Mandela Bay mayor James Jordan and Eastern Cape premier Phumulo Masinde would help. He could not say when children would return to school.

"I have an 11-year-old daughter who goes to school in



Richard Drael

the northern areas and it breaks my heart that she is missing out on school time.

"But we are doing what must be done to secure a decent future for our children and society," said Drael.

"The fact that Martin opens a case against his own government proves the gravity of the situation," he said. DA provincial education spokesperson Edmund van Vuuren asked why the ANC was opening criminal cases against themselves.

"Is Mr. Martin admitting his party has failed the people of the northern areas by not providing the necessary human resources, therefore implying his party should not be supported because of inactivity?"

Provincial government spokesperson Steve Kuppelo declined to comment on Martin's case, saying a multidisciplinary team had been appointed to look at the education problems in the northern areas.

He said that during Masinde's visit to the northern areas last week, "a number of challenges were raised, including teachers who go on very long sick leave".

and did not allow the ANC to call on the government to