

Rubber bullets fired at South African shack dwellers

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(GIN) - South African riot police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at crowds of protesters in two communities east of Johannesburg who are demanding better housing, running water and electricity in their townships.

Sakhile township, in the north-eastern Mpumalanga region, has been the scene of protests for two weeks. An estimated crowd of over 10,000 marched to the Lekwa Municipal offices in Standerton Tuesday.

Local officials are the target of the protests, not the six-month-old government of Jacob Zuma, according to Siphoo Seepe, a political columnist writing with the Mail and Guardian newspaper.

"What the people see is that the local government officials represent the past regime, a regime that was arrogant and aloof. They do not see these leaders at the local level as part of the new regime."

"A lot of things are not changing, we don't see any changes," said Amanda Jones, a demonstrator. "We thought Zuma could do better, so now we have to step up (our protests)... we are thinking of the future of our children."