

# Joburg CBD fire: Former Mayor Herman Mashaba recalls fruitless fight against hijacked buildings

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/joburg-cbd-fire-former-mayor-herman-mashaba-recalls-fruitless-fight-against-hijacked-buildings-breaking-31-august-2023/>

## Article Summary

An abandoned building in Johannesburg caught fire, resulting in the death of 73 occupants, including children. Former Mayor Herman Mashaba expressed that the tragedy could have been prevented if the issue of hijacked buildings had been addressed seriously. Mashaba, who fought against the hijacking of buildings during his tenure, blamed NGOs and the ANC government for sidetracking efforts to address the problem. ActionSA, led by Mashaba, demanded that the provincial government provide urgent emergency services, alternative accommodation, and establish a mobile clinic for the affected community. They also called for processes to reclaim hijacked buildings to prevent further disasters. ActionSA vowed to assist the affected families and prevent similar incidents in the future.

## General Analysis

The article reports on a tragic building fire in Johannesburg that claimed the lives of 73 people, including children. Former Mayor Herman Mashaba, now leader of ActionSA, expressed his condolences to the victims and their families. He also criticized the hijacking of buildings agenda and the failure of his administration to crack down on hijacked and dilapidated buildings in the city. ActionSA demands that the provincial government provide urgent emergency services to the affected community, including alternative accommodation and a mobile clinic. They also call for the expedited process of reclaiming these buildings to prevent similar disasters in the future.

## Article Sentiment

The sentiment of this news article is one of tragedy and sorrow. The article reports on a devastating fire in an abandoned building in Johannesburg that claimed the lives of 73 occupants, including children. Former Mayor Herman Mashaba, along with the political party ActionSA, expressed condolences to the victims and their families and called for urgent action to address the issue of hijacked buildings in the city. The sentiment is negative due to the tragic loss of life and the recognition of a preventable disaster.

## Overton Window

Based on the given article, it is difficult to determine the political leaning or bias of the news outlet that published it. The article provides a direct quote from Herman Mashaba, the former Mayor of Johannesburg and leader of ActionSA, without any commentary or analysis. The article also includes statements from Funzi Ngobeni, the ActionSA Gauteng Provincial Chairperson.

However, based on the content of the article, it can be inferred that ActionSA holds a center-right political stance. ActionSA's emphasis on reclaiming hijacked buildings and providing affordable housing aligns with a conservative approach to governance, emphasizing personal responsibility and limited government intervention.

In terms of its position within the Overton Window spectrum, this article appears to fall within the mainstream or moderate range. It does not contain extreme or radical viewpoints, but rather discusses the tragedy and issues surrounding hijacked buildings in a straightforward manner.

## Social Implications

1. **Loss of lives:** The tragic building fire resulted in the death of 73 occupants, including children. This loss of lives has a profound impact on the families of the victims and the broader community, leading to grief, trauma, and a sense of collective mourning.
2. **Housing crisis:** The story highlights the issue of hijacked buildings in Johannesburg and the lack of affordable housing. The existence of abandoned buildings, which are often illegally occupied, poses a danger to the residents and reflects the broader housing crisis in the city. This tragedy underscores the urgent need for the government to address the issue of housing and provide adequate and safe accommodations for its citizens.
3. **Accountability of the government:** The former mayor, Herman Mashaba, blames NGOs and the ANC government for sidetracking efforts to crack down on hijacked and dilapidated buildings. This raises questions about the accountability of the government and its commitment to addressing social issues such as housing. The public may demand transparency and effectiveness in the government's actions to prevent similar disasters in the future.
4. **Community solidarity:** The story mentions that leaders, including Herman Mashaba, descended on the Johannesburg CBD to support the families of the victims. This shows a sense of community solidarity and the importance of coming together during times of tragedy. It highlights the need for support systems and resources for those affected by the fire and the role of community leaders in advocating for change.
5. **Advocacy for change:** ActionSA, led by Herman Mashaba, demands urgent action from the Gauteng Province and the City of Johannesburg to provide emergency services, alternative accommodation, and reclaim hijacked buildings. This demonstrates the power of advocacy and the role of political leaders in pushing for policy changes and reforms that can prevent similar incidents in the future. It also

highlights the importance of community organizations in raising awareness and mobilizing support for social issues.

### **Political Implications**

1. **Blame and accountability:** The former Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba, blames the current ANC government and NGOs for sidetracking efforts to address the issue of hijacked and dilapidated buildings. This criticism highlights how political decisions and actions can contribute to tragic incidents like the fire.
2. **Public discourse on housing:** The incident brings attention to the issue of affordable housing and the conditions in which some people are forced to live. ActionSA, led by Mashaba, emphasizes the need for urgent action and demands that the government reclaim these buildings to provide proper housing. This highlights the prioritization of housing as a political issue and the potential for it to shape public discourse and policy.
3. **Political response and mobilization:** The presence of political leaders, including Mashaba, at the scene of the tragedy demonstrates the importance of public officials rallying behind affected communities. The demands made by ActionSA also put pressure on both the provincial government and the City of Johannesburg to respond promptly and effectively.
4. **Potential impact on the upcoming elections:** The tragedy and the political response to it can potentially shape public opinion and influence voting patterns in the upcoming elections. ActionSA's efforts to assist the community and its calls for urgent action may resonate with voters who prioritize issues like housing and public safety. Furthermore, the incident could contribute to debates and discussions around governance and accountability in Johannesburg.

### **Critical Analysis of the Article**

Overall, this news article appears to be written in a relatively neutral manner. However, there are a few potential biases and subjective language used by the author.

1. The title of the article, "PEOPLE DIE IN TRAGIC BUILDING FIRE IN JOBURG CBD," uses language that implies a strong emotional reaction to the event. The use of the word "tragic" can be seen as subjective and may elicit a particular emotional response from readers.
2. The author includes a quote from Herman Mashaba, former Mayor of the City of Johannesburg and leader of ActionSA. While it is important to include different perspectives, it is worth noting that Mashaba's statement is presented without much

context or counterargument. This could potentially give the impression that his views are the sole valid perspective on the issue.

3. The article includes statements from Funzi Ngobeni, ActionSA Gauteng Provincial Chairperson, emphasizing Mashaba's efforts during his tenure as mayor and calling for urgent action from the provincial government. While these statements are important to include, they are presented without any opposing viewpoints or criticism. This lack of balance could potentially create a bias towards ActionSA's agenda.

Overall, the article seems to provide a relatively balanced account of the events surrounding the building fire in Johannesburg CBD. However, the inclusion of quotes and statements without much context or opposing viewpoints may suggest a bias towards ActionSA's positions.