

Joburg CBD Fire: Inside the dilapidated hijacked buildings that sprawl the Johannesburg city centre

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Article Summary

The Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association (JPOMA) has called on the City of Johannesburg to take action against those who have hijacked buildings in the city centre, turning them into squalid and crime-ridden hotspots. According to the association's general manager, the issue has escalated in recent years, with criminals getting away with hijacking buildings for over a decade.

The buildings are left in disrepair as services are cut off due to non-payment, and even the police are afraid to confront the criminals. One example is Platinum Place, which was purchased by property company Afhco in 2010 with the intention of upgrading the surrounding area, but turned out to be a daunting and costly process to clear out the illegal tenants and clean up the building.

The JPOMA is calling on the City to create a workable strategy against building hijacking to ensure safe and affordable accommodation in the city.

General Analysis

The Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association (JPOMA) has urged the City of Joburg to take action against the hijacking of buildings in the inner city, which has turned them into crime hotspots and caused squalor.

The association claims that criminals have been getting away with this for over a decade, and it undermines the law, rule with violence, and leads to the degradation of buildings. The issue has escalated to the point where landlords seek advice on a weekly basis on how to protect their tenants and businesses.

One example is Platinum Place, which was hijacked and deteriorated into utter squalor. Property company Afhco purchased the building in 2010 as part of a plan to upgrade the surrounding area, but faced challenges due to water and power cuts, stolen power, garbage accumulation, and illegal tenants paying hijackers around R600 per week.

Afhco managed to transform Platinum Place into affordable, well-managed housing, but the neighbouring building, Msibi House, remains hijacked and an eyesore 16 years later. JPOMA

calls on the City to take action and create a strategy against building hijacking to ensure people can live and work safely in the inner city.

Article Sentiment

The sentiment of this news article is negative. The article highlights the dilapidated and squalid conditions of hijacked buildings in Johannesburg's inner city, which have become hotspots for crime. The article describes the degradation of buildings due to non-payment of services and the presence of criminals who undermine the law and rule with violence.

It also mentions the struggles faced by property owners and the efforts of one company to transform a hijacked building into safe and affordable housing. The article emphasizes the need for the City of Joburg to take action against building hijacking and create a strategy to address the issue. The overall tone of the article suggests frustration and concern about the violation of human rights and the deteriorating conditions in Johannesburg's inner city.

Overton Window

Based on the information provided in the news article, it is difficult to determine the overall political leaning or bias of the article. However, the article does align with a more conservative perspective when discussing the issue of hijacked buildings in Johannesburg's inner city. It highlights the concerns of landlords and property owners who want the City of Joburg to take action against those who have hijacked buildings and turned them into crime hotspots. The article emphasizes the need for a "workable strategy" against hijacking and argues that the situation in the inner city borders on human rights violations.

In terms of the Overton Window spectrum, this article seems to align with the status quo or conservative end. It portrays the hijacked buildings and the resulting squalor and crime as a major problem that needs to be addressed by the government. The article does not seem to advocate for radical solutions or promote any specific political ideology.

Social Implications

The social implications of this story are significant. First, the hijacking of buildings in the Johannesburg city centre has led to the deterioration of these structures, resulting in squalor and unsafe living conditions for the illegal tenants. This poses a threat to their health and well-being, as well as the safety of the surrounding community. It also highlights the issue of poverty and lack of affordable housing options in the city.

Second, the presence of illegal tenants and criminal activity in these hijacked buildings has turned them into crime hotspots. This affects the safety and security of the entire neighbourhood, as well as the businesses operating in the area. It creates an environment of fear and violence, making it difficult for residents and business owners to feel safe and thrive in the inner city. Third, the lack of action from the City of Johannesburg to address this issue has allowed criminals to continue hijacking buildings for a decade or more. This undermines the rule of law, creates a culture of impunity, and erodes public trust in the government's ability to maintain order and protect its citizens. Lastly, the story highlights

the need for a comprehensive and workable strategy to address the hijacking of buildings. This includes collaboration between the private sector and the city government to ensure affordable and properly maintained housing options for residents. It also involves tackling the underlying issues of poverty, unemployment, and urban decay that contribute to the hijacking problem in the first place. Failure to address these social implications can perpetuate the cycle of crime, deteriorating living conditions, and overall social unrest in the Johannesburg city centre.

Political Implications

The political implications of this story are as follows:

1. **Inefficiency of local government:** The story highlights the failure of the City of Johannesburg to address the issue of building hijackings and the resulting deterioration of the inner city. This raises questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the local government in dealing with urban development and crime prevention.
2. **Corruption and organized crime:** The article mentions that criminals have been getting away with hijacking buildings for a decade or more, implying the involvement of corrupt officials or organized crime syndicates. This raises concerns about the level of corruption within the city and the potential links between criminal networks and political figures.
3. **Violation of human rights:** The squalid living conditions in the hijacked buildings and the lack of basic services such as water and electricity raise human rights concerns. It reflects a lack of government intervention to ensure that citizens have access to safe and habitable living conditions, particularly in low-income areas.
4. **Economic impact:** The deterioration of the inner city due to building hijackings and crime hotspots can have negative economic implications. It can discourage potential investors and drive businesses and residents away from the area, leading to a decline in economic activity and development.
5. **Public safety:** The article mentions that even the police are afraid to confront the criminals involved in building hijackings. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts and the ability of citizens to feel safe and secure in their own neighbourhoods. It underscores the need for improved community policing and stronger law enforcement measures to tackle crime in the city.

Overall, the story highlights the need for political intervention and policy reforms to address the issue of building hijackings, improve urban development, combat corruption and organized crime, protect human rights, and ensure public safety in Johannesburg.

Critical Analysis of the Article

This news article titled "Joburg CBD Fire: Inside the dilapidated hijacked buildings that sprawl the Johannesburg city centre" focuses on the issue of building hijacking and the resulting squalor and crime in Johannesburg's inner city. While it does not contain any explicit biased language, there are potential biases and subjective language that can be identified:

1. **Use of subjective language:** The article frequently uses subjective language to emphasize the negative conditions and the severity of the problem. Phrases such as "plunged them into squalor," "utter squalor," "daunting," "horrors of a decade ago," and "squalor" convey a negative tone and an implicit negative judgement.
2. **Selective sourcing:** The article primarily relies on the perspective of Angela Rivers, the general manager of the Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association (JPOMA). While her views provide valuable insights, the article could benefit from including additional perspectives to provide a more balanced assessment of the issue.
3. **Absence of alternative solutions or viewpoints:** The article does not explore any alternative solutions or viewpoints on how to address the problem of building hijacking. This absence of alternative perspectives potentially contributes to a one-sided narrative.
4. **Emotional appeal:** The article frequently uses emotional language and appeals to evoke sympathy for the victims of building hijacking. For example, the statement "What is happening in our city borders on human rights violations" appeals to readers' emotions and implies that the issue is a clear violation of human rights.

In order to promote impartiality, the article could benefit from incorporating diverse perspectives from relevant stakeholders, including the authorities responsible for addressing the issue, experts on urban planning, and representatives of the hijacked buildings' occupants. Furthermore, the article could provide a more balanced assessment by exploring any efforts being made to address the problem and the challenges faced in finding feasible solutions.