

Informal traders inside Cape Town mall told to vacate by next Sunday

By [Ashraf Hendricks](#)

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Informal traders inside the Belhar Airport Mall have been asked to vacate by 12 March.



Fatima Davids has been selling sweets, cereals and spices at her stall inside the Belhar Airport Mall for several years. She is among dozens of informal traders in the mall who have been issued notices by management to vacate the premises. Photos: Ashraf Hendricks

Fatima Davids has been selling sweets, cereals and spices at her stall inside the Belhar Airport Mall for several years. She is among dozens of informal traders in the mall who have been issued notices by management to vacate the premises. They were initially told to leave by 28 February but it was extended to 12 March so they could try and find alternative places to trade.

However, this notice came as a shock to many of the traders, many of whom like Davids, rely on the money they make selling their goods to survive and support their families. Silverbird Investments, in the notice, stated that “All informal trade needs to be suspended as it is a fire and health and safety risk. Informal trade does not form part of our occupancy quote.”

When *GroundUp* visited the mall, Davids and a dozen other traders were busy selling a variety of goods from clothing to perfumes. Their stalls and tables are mostly positioned in the centre of the walkway in the mall with larger retail stores on either side. We were told that traders pay R50 a day and R100 on days when beneficiaries collect their grants.

Traders reliant on income

Davids, 62, says that her husband is bedridden after having six strokes, so she needs this extra income. She gets an Old Age grant, and her husband receives the disability grant but most of the money goes towards medical bills and transport to the hospital.

Dauids says she can hardly afford to buy food after paying rent and electricity. “I don’t want to beg and just want to make an honest living,” she says. “It’s not fair towards us.”



Igsaan Bester helps his daughter sell savouries at the mall so she can have extra income to support her family because her husband is paralysed. Photos: Ashraf Hendricks

Igsaan Bester, 68, helps his daughter sell savouries like pies, samoosas and koeksisters. He says they have been trading there for about three years. “My son-in-law is paralysed so my daughter needs the extra income to support her family.” Bester says that they still are not sure how they can suddenly be a “fire hazard” at the mall.

Another trader, who asked to remain anonymous as she wasn’t the stall owner, says it was her first job in five years. She has only been there for two months. “We just came at a bad time.” She says she hopes the mall will be able to accommodate them outside or allow them to trade on assigned days or weekends.



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Eugene Clark, director of Silver Bird Investments, told *GroundUp* that the mall had initially allocated the space to traders “to create trade opportunities for members of the community and to allow small goods to be sold”. Clark said that this has since become problematic because the tables and chairs, in the common area walkway, were listed “as a risk” by the fire inspector.

Clark said that they are exploring the possibility of moving the informal traders to a different location but it will not be a quick process.

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