
South Africa: Bloemfontein's Fidel Castro Building Gets Mixed Response

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The name change of the old CR Swart building in Bloemfontein to honour former Cuban president Fidel Castro has been met with mixed feelings.

The building's name was officially changed on Wednesday as part of the visit by the Cuban 5 to the city, but the name change was announced several months ago.

The Democratic Alliance, as the official opposition in the provincial legislature, was not opposed to name changes in principle, DA chief whip David van Vuuren said.

"But we are opposed to any renaming that has not gone through a process and in this instance, public participation was not part of the name change," he told News24.

"We would have preferred it if the people of Mangaung and the Free State were approached to say who they think the building should have been named after. Someone [who] has made a difference to their lives and living conditions."

According to Economic Freedom Front provincial chairperson Kgotso Morapela, the province's other large political party, they supported the name change.

"It is the view of the EFF that all apartheid names be removed. We believe proper consultation was done. We value the contribution the Cuban people have made to our country and the contribution they have made in the struggle," Morapela told News24.

The Fidel Castro building is the tallest in Bloemfontein, houses the provincial administration, and is also known as "The Pride of the Free State".

It previously boasted a revolving restaurant on the 26th floor. There are plans to resurrect it, but the province is battling to find a suitable service provider.
