

South Africa to Kick Homeless Off Streets before World Cup

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Thousands of homeless people are being forced off the streets of South Africa to hide the scale of poverty there from World Cup fans.

More than 800 tramps, beggars and street children have already been removed from Johannesburg and sent to remote settlements hundreds of miles away.

And in Cape Town, where England face Algeria on June 18, up to 300 have been moved to Blikkiesdorp camp where 1,450 families are crammed in a settlement of tin huts designed for just 650 people.

Johannesburg councillor Sipho Masigo was unrepentant. "Homelessness and begging are big problems in the city," he said. "You have to clean your house before you have guests. There is nothing wrong with that.

"The numbers of homeless are in the hundreds, leading up to thousands." Other host cities - like Rustenburg where England kick off their campaign against the USA on June 12 - are believed to be drawing up similar plans to move homeless people away from tourist areas near town centres and stadiums. South Africans are desperate to cast their country in a positive light despite soaring crime, drug use and the HIV crisis. Campaigners have slammed the removals policy as a sham and a temporary solution.

Bill Rogers, who works with the homeless in Johannesburg, said: "Rather than help people permanently, the government's obvious intention is to release them back on the streets after the World Cup."

Warren Whitfield, of homeless charity Addiction Action, added: "It's a cosmetic fix to create an impression of South Africa for football fans which is not real.

"We have huge problems with homelessness and that is what the world should see."

Top Guns' guard on the teams ENGLAND'S football stars will be escorted by two fighter jets every time they fly during the World Cup.

Defence chiefs in South Africa have drawn up the plan to protect Fabio Capello's squad from terror atrocities.

The 31 other competing nations will also be protected by the same airborne "ring of steel" amid fears extremists could target high-profile players as they fly between matches.

A source said: "FIFA and the South Africans are taking no chances with the security."

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