

# Tavern licence boycott called

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Tavern owners across the Eastern Cape are being urged to boycott the renewal of their liquor licences following a whopping increase from R250 to R2,500 a year. The boycott appeal was made by the Eastern Cape Liquor Forum (ECLF) at the Babs Madlakane Hall in Uitenhage yesterday.



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A liquor licence allows a tavern owner to legally sell alcohol to patrons. The forum, which has 20 affiliated associations in the province, is made up of more than 5,000 tavern owners. The boycott will be held from 1 October to 15 December, the period when businesses are meant to renew their licences through the Eastern Cape Liquor Board.

ECLF president Winston Hector said the boycott would intensify until the government, which oversees the liquor board, met the forum's requirement of reducing the fee.

"We appeal to all our members to withhold payments for the renewal of licence fees until further notice," Hector said. "These renewals [fees] are illegally instituted without consultation with tavern owners or their representatives."

Another proposal was to boycott South African Breweries.

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"The exorbitant fees amount to abuse, oppression and discrimination. Consultation is a constitutional obligation and any law or amendment without consultation and fairness is illegal," he said.

ECLF spokesman Mkhusele Mbelu said a 10% increase was understandable, but increasing the amount by R2,250 was ridiculous. "Bottle store owners where we buy our liquor do not even pay that amount," he said.

Eastern Cape Liquor Board spokesman Mgwebi Msiya said they were not aware of the pending boycott. "We are busy with licence renewals and we expect everyone to comply with this process." He said the reason for the increase was explained to the tavern owners. "However, they raised their concerns and wrote to the office of the premier."

*Source: Herald*

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