

Bathurst's Continued Fight to Combat Murders

By: Sinalo Peyi

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As South Africa celebrated the Springbok's 4th World Rugby championship win, the Bathurst community was shaken with fear and tears. Located in the Eastern Cape, under Ndlambe Municipality, community members have been living in fear. This is due to people being brutally murdered in their homes, and children being sexually assaulted inside school premises like at Qhayiya Primary School.

These attacks made the community grieve not knowing who to turn to for help as the police did not do anything about any of the attacks, which happened in November 2023. People feel like it is only the beginning as the crime rate is rapidly increasing. The crime rate is increasing mainly because of substance abuse, specifically drug use which is very popular in the small location.

In the first week of November 2023, a man aged 56 was murdered in his house. Some community members believe it was robbery as the man had just sold his cow and the money he received was not found at the scene.

The man was found tied to his bed with his head crushed with a hammer three days after he had been murdered. He was found after a neighbour smelled a terrible scent coming from the victim's house and went to knock. After an unusual silence, they kicked open the door and saw his decomposing body.

It has been four weeks since his body was found now, and there have been no arrests nor any progress made in the case. On Sunday, 5 November 2023, Lungelo Jonas (47) was brutally stabbed to death inside his house around 4:00 am. The police were called after he was seen bleeding, but the police could not attend to the case stating there was no one at the police station to attend to the matter.

The community members were so angry alleging that the police use the state vans for their personal reasons. Specifically, it is suspected that one van was used that morning as personal transportation, and that is why they did not arrive. This was shouted in passing by a friend of the deceased. He added that they will not let this go and will "help" the police to do their job because they are failing.

Recently, a suspect behind the murder of Lungelo Jonas was reported to have handed himself over to the police and is awaiting trial. The suspect has a criminal history after he was convicted for murder, where he robbed and killed a person for his money and dumped him in the bushes. He was arrested and served time in prison but was released in 2022.

Despite this fact, it is alleged by one of the community members in passing said the suspect was out on bail and is back in the community.

Another member of the community said they do not think the community is safe because this murderer is back in the community and may kill someone else.

On Sunday, 12 November 2023, an unidentified man aged 59 years old was gunned down inside his yard while cleaning his car at 9:00 am. Neighbours said they saw the two suspects carrying guns and shot at the man two times in the head and fled.

Another suspected "drunk" neighbour claimed he saw what happened. He also believed he could describe the shooters as they were driving a 15-seater Toyota Quantum minibus.

The “drunk” neighbour believed the murder was taxi related because he recently registered a taxi association successfully just before he was murdered.

To date, community members are crying out saying they are scared because they feel they are living in a world where any day could be their last. "We are being forced to use a certain taxi association and we are scared of the drivers and their beatings," said a community member.

Following these events, the community called a meeting with government stakeholders and the police. On Tuesday, 21 November 2023 the community invited *Karibu!* to attend the meeting where they would be getting answers regarding the murders that are happening.

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