

Wattville Community Start A Neighbourhood Watch to Deal with Crime

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In Wattville, Benoni (east of Johannesburg) the community have lived in fear because there is no police station in the area. Residents have to walk 6km away to a neighbouring community's SAPS (South African Police Services) station in Actonville for assistance when facing any issues. Crime has steadily increased over the years, and more since the pandemic started. Not having a police station nearby has made it more dangerous for the community.

Sibongile Dladla, a 21-year-old resident of Wattville said; "If something can happen to me in Wattville at night I would have to walk very far to the nearest police station, putting my life even further at risk, so I don't feel safe at all in this community. Also I think that is why most crimes that happen in Wattville are not reported – the police station is too far."

On 11 November 2019, the Democratic Alliance sent a petition to parliament requesting the police minister Bheki Cele have a police station established in Wattville. Since then and up to the present date Wattville remains without a police station.

Many feel the crime in Wattville has become worse; it is becoming increasingly dangerous for community to enjoy their place of residence, especially at night. Criminals have been known to mug community members walking in the street and now they have also resorted to frequent housebreak-ins, even when the people of the house are still home.

"On the 2nd of February I was sleeping in the house with my husband and our four-year-old daughter when three men came in, held us at gunpoint and robbed us of money, electronics and some of my husband's shoes. I was very scared I just prayed that they don't decide to kill my husband and rape my daughter and I," said an emotional Lindiwe Zulu from Wattville.

After hearing this, Prudence Ndlovu, a local community leader, decided to call a meeting to establish a neighbourhood watch group that will patrol the streets at night and they also issued community members with whistles that they can use in case of a robbery. Ndlovu said that as a woman living alone when she heard the story about Lindiwe and other neighbours that have been mugged or broken into, she felt they had to act.

One of the members of the watch, Papi said, "I feel sorry for the women and young girls in our neighbourhood because it is not safe for them. Many homes here don't have an 'older male figure' in the house so they are vulnerable."

The community of Wattville is tired of all this crime and no protection from the police. Residents have decided to protect themselves instead because they found there is no other way.

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