

Bathurst Community is Not Safe

By Sinalo Peyi

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Bathurst community members report a rise in criminal activity in the township since at least January 2025. They met to draft petitions advocating for community safety and ensuring that justice prevails. Residents feel that the law is not adequately protecting them, allowing criminals the freedom to act as they wish despite the existence of the law. The petitions aim to affirm their right to freedom of movement while ensuring their safety.

The crimes afflicting Bathurst range from cases of rape, robbery, break ins, and shootings. Many of the crimes in Bathurst go unsolved, residents report. Some community members believe that crime is enabled by rogue members of the police, as there are very few arrests made. These residents add that some police members are part of the circulation of drugs in the community. The leaders of the local community crime fighting forum have promised to try and find out if there are police involved, to ensure they are removed from the police service.

Isikhalo Women's Movement representative Siphosethu Ndabeni, commented saying that since Bathurst is a small town, many residents know each other very well, adding that many police officers are friends with people who commit crime. "So, they tend to protect them, and the criminal activities continue," Added Ndabeni. The activist added that the problem extended to the Crime Fighters team, where she alleged that some people share information with criminals who rob. These compromised crime fighters protect the criminals in return for a fee, Ndabeni concluded.

Thozama Peyi a Crime Fighter and a resident of Bathurst, agreed with Ndabeni that activists cannot trust anyone blindly as many cases involved respected people in the forum and in the police service. Peyi also commented that the criminals use a type of drug to immobilise their targets, allowing them to do as they please and raid homes. "No one is safe and no one wants to fight anymore because people fear for their safety. After all, we do not have each other's backs," Peyi concluded.

Bathurst resident, Zandile Sibani, who is a survivor, reported that a gang of criminals sexually assaulted her in November 2024 on her way home. She reports that no one was arrested for the crime. Sibani also complained that the community has turned cold and cruel, saying, "It is obvious that new people are joining the community every day, and it is these unknown criminals who run from their communities also to join forces with the community criminals to torment the community," Sibani concluded.

The community says they always strive to fight crime while also making efforts to improve safety and avoid becoming targets. Balancing these has been difficult leading to many residents to prioritise their own individual safety and security. Bathurst was once a small, tight knit and united community, but it has now turned cold. They feel that the law, instead of protecting them, enables criminal activity to persist. The community committed to end crime in the area and ensure a return to

the peaceful and safe community Bathurst once was - where women and children could walk alone on the streets of Bathurst without fearing for their lives.

The community described Bathurst as a community full of politicians and people who fought so hard for freedom, but their stories were not told, people who continue to fight for a free and safe community. The community is described as a community where all these mentioned criminal activities were foreign and people fought together to ensure they do not continue but now everyday a new case of any kind of crime is reported and remains unsolved, while it continues to haunt the community now, the community says it is enough.

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