

Community in Solidarity Against Injustice and Crime

By Sinalo Peyi

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The community of Bathurst Location in the Eastern Cape has been under a horrific experience due to a very high crime rate. Cases were reviewed by the community and the community leaders.

Many cases in Bathurst go unsolved, Ward 5 Councillor Mzwandile Makwayi called a meeting with the Bathurst police regarding the cases and the safety of school children. Women and men that found themselves battling with abuse in the community.

The community were given an opportunity to voice out their concerns about the service they get from the police and at the police station. On 01 August 2024 at Solomon Mahlangu Hall community members arrived wearing different political organisational tee shirts. The intention was to fight as one.

More than 50 community members attended including pastors and business owners pulling side-to-side with the community in the fight against poor policing and a high crime rate. Community leader, Thozama George, opened the meeting by telling the community how much they are suffering from crimes in the community caused by drugs and unemployment.

She mentioned that in Bathurst children from 12 and above become drug addicts and end up in jail. George said some parents play a role in drug distribution as they sell drugs during break time to learners. Miss George concluded that some police officers are also involved in drugs selling using youth who are themselves users.

Another community member, Thozama Gaga started said "There are so many cases that became cold cases because of the police ignorance and rude staff in the police station." Gaga made an example of cases of the brutal killing of women, saying that when residents go to report at the police station, they would find the gates locked or find that there are no vans available. Police sometimes tell residents to go and sort their problems with the partner which has at times later led to the murder of the person who was turned away.

Acting Station Commander Mr Abe Abraham explained that the issues that were raised by the community are shocking news to him. "We have a huge problem of shortage of staff in the station and we are trying by all means to pull through." He said regarding the police vehicle and the rude staff members in the police station there is a solution where the complainant may write down their complaints and will be submitted to the station commander and rude staff be dealt with.

Isikhalo activist Siphosethu Ndabeni said that the number of unsolved cases is greater than the number of solved cases here. "Every time I watch crime reality shows I notice that in other countries there are no unsolved cases and there is so much equipment to solve every case I don't know about this country, and it seems that we will be killed, and our killers will walk free because of this justice system."

Ndabeni concluded that the only way to live in a safe and secure society is for the community to start taking law into their own hands and rid the community of crime. Some recent cases that went cold were argued by the community is that of a case of a 40-year-old man who was tied on his bed and his head was smashed until he died, his money was stolen but no arrest has been made.

Lungelo Jonas was discovered by his younger sister fatally stabbed on the neck, but the killer later turned himself in, scared of the community. the killer was released two months later committing more murders. A 19-year-old girl was gang rapped until she could not walk but no arrests have ever been made. 80-year-old community elder said, "We fought for this land, this community."

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