

Kidnapping of Children Increased in 2024

By Mamello Masoatsa

Early In July 2024 reports came of a rise in cases of children being kidnapped especially by close people in the family. These people target children when they are going and coming back from school. In a recent kidnapping incident in Soweto a little girl managed to escape and was found alive. It was reported that this girl was taken by a close friend of the family.

Reports also came that these people use children or women's body parts for rituals to make them rich or make powerful muthi (Traditional medicine). Parents no longer know who to trust since close family friends and community members are the ones kidnapping kids in the area. According to Statistics SA (StatsSA), more than 16 000 kidnappings are recorded annually in South Africa. Shockingly, 85 percent of these victims are women and children. Children between the ages of 3 to 25 years of age are mostly targeted and kidnapped because they are still young.

Kidnappers trick kids by giving them sweets and money or by telling them that their parents said they should give them lift, if a child refuses, they are taken by force. Stats SA also revealed that as of the 2022 / 2023 financial year, the total number of kidnappings in South Africa reached 15 343 cases. Gauteng had the highest number of kidnappings, with 7 818 reports. KwaZulu-Natal followed with 3 081 cases of kidnapping in the same period.

Since parents were introduced to tracking watches, they are happy, but some are not pleased because they do not afford the devices. The parents are now scared and do not know who to trust about their children because the perpetrators of the crime of child kidnapping may also be family members and community members.

"I would die if ever I found out that my child has been abducted but I will fight by all means to find my child and murder that person because my son means everything to me," said a parent.

Parents and guardians should always be vigilant, ensure your child has a safe way to always contact you. Teach your child to say "No" firmly and loudly if someone tries to take them or touch them inappropriately. Listen to your child; don't disregard their fears and finally, know the routes your child takes to and from school, friends' homes and other activities.

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