

Letter to the Editor: Carletonville as 'Afghanistan'

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Carletonville in the far West Rand is a mining community today dominated by illegal miners commonly known as zama zamas, involved in unregistered small-scale mining. The residents of this town live in fear as they are tormented by these armed zama zamas. "Imagine going to bed, then suddenly in the middle of the night a group of armed men enter your residence and tell you to leave; they now own the place," says one resident.

Different groups of zama zamas engage in turf wars about who owns the land and who can do this unlicensed work, putting thousands of lives at risk. These unhinged activities do not only put thousands of innocent lives on the firing line, but women and children are particularly affected. Community members say that many women are getting raped, infringing on safety and freedom while also destroying residents' shelter.

Carletonville harbours kingpins and dangerous people despite it being a small town. The South African Police Service has decimally failed the residents of this town in the outskirts of Gauteng, such that all hope is now lost for many.

Over the past two weeks, Wedela township has been on lock down. This lockdown was not from authorities but from the zama zamas. All the residents, including children, knew that being away from home by sunset meant being at risk of death. Residents believe that national authorities are aware of the state of the Merafong City Local Municipality where Wedela is located.

This is the case in the Westrand at large as well, yet the response has only been to just deploy South African National Defence Force members for half a day to patrol the section where they hear the most commotion from. The reality is no one is safe, and those in power know whom to hold accountable for everything, especially with the Madlanga Commission happening and setting an example. These wars can be a distraction for far worse sinister situations happening in our community.

Wedela and the greater Carletonville play a significant role in of the production of gold and contribute to its distribution in the country historically. The area is home to the World's deepest mine, known as Mponeng. This mine lies just five minutes away from the home of the author, yet the fear of losing more homes, lives, and more rape cases is a personal nightmare day in and day out for her. The town is not in the spotlight; so its problems are obscured, yet its gold keeps the country's economy afloat and thriving.

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