

## **Rape Victim Struggles to Get Police to Help, Port Alfred Community Gets Involved**

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A 24-year-old woman from Port Alfred, a small town in the Eastern Cape, has been hiding since 2017 following a brutal incident of sexual assault.

On 15 September 2024 the victim who cannot be named due to legal procedures as the matter is in being investigated, told the Crime Fighter Committee in Port Alfred that they were walking back from a tavern, and headed home, when they met three men in their 40s. The men took these young girls aged 15,16 and 17, to a field away from the main road, at a spot near a sewerage drain where they beat them up and repeatedly raped them. The incident occurred in 2017.

One of the men took out a knife and ordered the girls to stab each other but when they refused, one of the men grabbed one of the girls and raped her continually. He beat her up before throwing her inside a drain after stabbing her in front of the other girls to see. The suspects then allegedly closed the sewerage drain together with the clothes the suspect was wearing as they had a lot of blood stains.

The three men continued to rape and assault the two remaining girls while leading them deeper into the bushes where they attempted to hang one of the girls three times without success. As luck would have it, the rope kept breaking leading to the assailants giving up their attack. They threatened both the victims to never say a word to anyone, promising to kill them like the one who was dumped inside the sewerage drain.

According to a voice note which Karibu! possesses, "one suspect forced the fearful victim to be in a relationship with him and impregnating her in the process. The teen who survived, now a young woman, went into hiding in Gqeberha (formerly, Port Elizabeth) returning after hearing that the suspects moved from Port Alfred and that one was arrested.

According to some reports, one of the suspects moved to Kenton on Sea while another moved to Peddie. The third suspect was arrested for raping another victim. These events influenced the 24-year-old to return to Port Alfred. She reported what happened to her and the other two girls in what was a traumatic affair for her.

The story was shared with the Port Alfred Crime Fighters represented by Mr Moyikwa from Port Alfred, the group took steps to help the woman.

The Crime Fighters linked with the Khula Foundation which deals with cases involving women and child abuse, represented by Mr Petros Majola and the Port Alfred Fire Fighters.

The 24-year-old survivor took the community to the scene of the brutal crime where the ropes could still be seen. The woman cried as memories of the assault came back to her. The party also went to the sewerage drain where her friend and cousin was killed and hidden, although she struggled to point out the specific drain, according to the voice note.

On 18 September 2024 the community took the survivor to Nemato Police Station to open a case. The police on duty did not take the case seriously. When the victim led the police to the crime scene, she could not remember every detail and every spot, the police stopped the search and told the victim that she “must be hungry”, taking her home without trying to find the exact crime scene. On 19 September 2024, the police took the victim up and down without assisting.

On the same day, Mr Majola, the community representative, Mr Moyikwa, the victim, and a regional police member had a phone call around 16:00, at which time the police started to acknowledge how serious and deep the case was as it includes murder, attempted murder, assault, and rape. A decision to handle the case involving the community and the parents of the murdered victim was taken.

The mother of the murdered girl revealed that she had reported her child missing and left her child’s birth certificate at the police station in 2017. She said that the police were following up on the case or file a missing child report.

The community went to look for the third victim who fell pregnant but could not find her as she relocated to Makana (formerly, Grahamstown), promising to go look for her before the court date.

On 20 September 2024, the victim went to the police station again for a statement who heavily interrogated her. She had to walk from town to the township for more than 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The Ndlambe Municipality and some police went to the sewerage drain where the remains of the murdered girl were hidden and made a discovery of human remains inside. These were taken to the forensics for DNA tests.

From 20 September 2024 the police, the community and also the Ndlambe Municipality have been busy gathering the community to organise a proper burial ceremony for the deceased victim and also a call-out to the families of the suspects who have been running up and down to make sure the case does not go anywhere, also to the community and the victims who are alive to know that in their name and honour law will take its course.

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