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Anti-sexual offence campaign taken to churches

Palesa Ntshotsho

Different stakeholders in the society need to play a role in fighting to reduce – and even end – sexual offences that are perpetrated largely against women and children.

And churches come out highly recommended for intervention in communities. This is why the Department of Community Safety and Transport Management's Crime Prevention unit together with Boitekong South African Police Service recently visited the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa at Boitekong Township in Rustenburg, in an effort to engage the church on the matter.

The visit was part of the Anti-Sexual Offence Campaign to raise awareness as well as to empower the community in the fight against sexual offences and abuse of women and children. The campaign was also meant to encourage community members and organizations to report crime to the police.

Police said sexual offences against

women and children are often committed by people who ought to love and protect them.

"Though there are other crimes committed, including housebreaking and car theft in Boitekong, there is a high rate of sexual offences and rape committed against women and children in the area. And the majority of these cases were perpetrated by people close to the victims, some of whom are uncles, stepfathers, neighbours and siblings. What is worse is that most of these cases involving close family members and neighbours are not reported. There is fear. Some buy favours and others make arrangements to silence people, much against the wish and will of victims who continue to suffer physical, social and psychological effects alone," said Constable Ketshepile Mathelela of Boitekong Police Station.

Constable Mathelela urged community members to work together with the police in their fight against any type of crime.

The department's Crime Prevention unit representative, Boitumelo Maraba, explained the different kinds of sexual offences to the congregation.

"Rape and sexual assault are acts of

sexual violation and are committed without the consent of the victim. This kind of criminal act should be reported to the police at all times. Sexual offence is a serious issue, which happens not only to young girls and women, but also to young boys. Hence we need to start talking and educating our young boys and girls about these issues.

What women wear should not be used as a scapegoat. We should teach our boys at an early stage so that we can change the mindset of our sons. Motswana a re 'le ojwa le sa le metsi', teach them whilst they are still young and tender at heart. Our boys must grow up to be responsible men and fathers who love and respects women, girls and boys," Maraba said.

"We can only win this battle if we, as communities, churches, the government and the South African Police Service, stand together and protect our beloved ones. The Saamwerk-Saamtrek approach to issues that continue to ravage our communities by violating our precious women and girl children will get us the necessary results regarding reduction and ultimate stoppage to this scourge of

crime".

Maraba said everyone, including churches and communities, must make it their responsibility to prevent gender-based violence.

"Our men and boys must refrain from alcohol and drug abuse, which is often used as an excuse in defense of crime committed against women and children. Let us say no to violence. Let us live a violent free life. Let us say, 'Not in my name'. Let us chase the perpetrators out. Let us report all gender-based violence. Let us support the victims. Let our communities become safe havens for victims. Crime is crime, even when committed by siblings, parents, fathers, boys, neighbours, elders in the family or in the neighbourhood," Maraba emphasized.

Church leaders were told that they've got a duty to encourage members to report confessions made to the church to police in order to help eradicate this scourge.

Boitekong came out prominently in the SAPS 2016/17 Crime Statistics report as a crime-riddled mining township, surpassing notorious places like Kanana and Woimaranstad.

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Two young men killed in 'mistaken identity'

ELFAS TORERAI

THE community of Setlopo Utlwanang, near Mahikeng, is in shock after two young men were fatally assaulted in a case police described as mistaken identity.

The deceased, aged 21 and 23, were attacked on allegations that they had desecrated a grave.

North West police spokesperson Lt-Col Adèle Myburgh said it turned out that the two were wrongly accused.

"Three people have since been arrested and charged with two counts of murder. They appeared at the Mmabatho Magistrate's Court and their case was postponed to Friday," she said.

Myburgh said Humeleeng Masaneke, 19, Tumelo Ruiters, 28 and Kenneth

Masheba, 34, attacked the deceased after they found the two at the cemetery.

"Allegations are that the suspects accused the pair of damaging a tombstone, grabbed and severely assaulted them."

"One of the victims died on the spot while the other later succumbed to his injuries in hospital," she said.

Police have since warned residents

against taking the law into their own hands.

"In this particular case, it turned out that the two lost their lives yet they were wrongly accused and it is imperative, therefore, that people desist from taking the law into their own hands," she said.

At their next appearance, the three are expected to formally apply for bail.

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Police commissioner General Khehla Sitole (centre) urged cops to stay safe this festive season.

Cops told to take on criminals

By KGOMOTSO MEDUPE

COPS must not die with guns in their holsters.

This was the message sent to officers by police commissioner General Khehla Sitole at the launch of Operation Safer Festive Season at the Union Buildings in Tshwane on Friday.

Addressing about 150 cops, the commissioner said the safety of police officers comes first.

“Crime cannot be fought with a demoralised workforce. I am behind you, no matter what happens during this operation.”

He warned cops not to target the public but to go straight for criminals.

“Young people should be able to occupy public spaces with no fear if we are there,” he said.

Meanwhile, Police Minister Fikile Mbalula said he was pleased with the work done by cops this festive season.

Mbalula said since the start of the police campaign to clean the streets of South Africa, several firearms and drug caches had been seized.

“On 6 December, KZN cops arrested four men, one of whom is a policeman, following an ongoing probe into murders at Glebelands Hostel,” said Mbalula.

The arrests come a week after the minister launched a satellite police station near the hostel.

“The arrest of an officer must serve as a clear warning that the South African Police Service will never tolerate the betrayal of the badge.”