

Government to assist Stella families with burials

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The staircase on which one of the girls was found hanged at Stella High School

Photo by Mpho Bilwane



MECs Mpho Motlhabane (Community Safety and Transport Management), Sello Lehari (Education and Sport Development) and Hoffman Galeng (Social Development) during a visit to Stella High School where two girls were found murdered

Photo by Mpho Bilwane

"What happened here is very bad and we are worried as the department. However, going forward, we are going to intervene in terms of security. The task team led by the district director has been sent to the school to assess and come up with any remedial action to beef up security."

Obakeng Maje

The Provincial government of Bokone Bophirima has offered to assist the families of Stella High School victims with funeral arrangements. The two female teenage learners were found murdered last weekend.

MEC for Education and Sport Development, Sello Lehari, MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Dr Mokgantsang Mpho Motlhabane and Social Development MEC, Hoffman Galeng, visited the school on Tuesday.

Marna Engelbrecht (17) and Sharnelle Hough (16) were found hanged at the school hostel on Saturday morning. The police arrested Zander Bylsman (19), a former learner at the same school who is believed to be an ex-boyfriend of one of the deceased girls.

He appeared briefly at the Vryburg Magistrate's Court and was remanded in custody until 6 August 2018 for further investigations. Provincial police spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Amanda Funani, said the two girls were alone in the female hostel on Friday night and their lifeless bodies were discovered by the hostel matron the following day.

"Firstly, the matron found the body of a girl (17) hanging from the rails of the staircase in the hostel. She alerted the school management and the police were summoned to the scene. Upon investigation, the police discovered the second body with a string around her neck at the hostel's bathroom.

"Subsequently, the police arrested Bylsman, who is believed to be an ex-boyfriend of one of the two girls," she said.

Education MEC Lehari said the department was concerned about the tragedy.

"What happened here is very bad and we are worried as the department. However, going forward, we are going to intervene in terms of security. The task team led by the district director has been sent to the school to assess and come up with any remedial action to beef up security.

"You cannot have more than 60 learners in a hostel without security. We will work jointly with the school to improve security and there will be serious changes. The department also visited the families of the deceased and reached an agreement on how to assist with burials," said Lehari.

Social Development MEC Galeng said his department has already commenced with counselling for all affected parties.

Community Safety and Transport Management MEC Motlhabane said the department would deploy policemen to assist with security at schools.

"We have a programme that works closely with the Department of Education called Adopt-A-Cop. Now schools in particular areas will be serviced by a particular cop that will deal with criminal activities that might occur in those schools," said Motlhabane.

The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education also expressed saddened and outrage with the murders. Committee Chairperson, Nomalungelo Gina, condemned femicide and any form of violence against women and children.

"Surely our young men cannot be thinking that this is a way to address challenges. Furthermore, the gruesome manner in which these young girls were killed is truly shocking," Gina said.

She praised the police for the speedy arrest of the suspect and appealed for a quick process to find justice for the murdered girls.

Hawks nab kidnappers

A teenage girl allegedly forced into prostitution has been rescued and two women arrested in connection with her kidnapping, the directorate for priority crime investigation (Hawks) in North West said yesterday.

Spokesperson captain Tlangeni Rikhotso said the women were arrested on May 24 in a joint operation by the Hawks' serious organised crime unit and the Mahikeng tactical response team (TRT) after the pair allegedly kidnapped the 17-year-old girl on April 8.

"It is alleged the two suspects abducted the girl at a hiking spot at Lichtenburg and (she) was forced into prostitution, drugs and alcohol consumption," said Rikhotso.

Acting on a tip off, the Hawks, working with TRT went unannounced to a house suspected to be a prostitution den and arrested the two suspects.

"The young girl was rescued and taken to a place of safety," said Rikhotso.

Natasha Moncho, 22, and Mpho Sebati, 20, appeared briefly at the Lichtenburg Magistrate's Court on Wednesday on charges of abduction, rape, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

They were remanded in custody after their case was postponed to June 27 for investigation. - ANA

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'Sex slave' rescued

A TEENAGE girl allegedly forced into prostitution has been rescued and two women arrested over her kidnapping, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) in the North West said.

The women were arrested on May 24 after the pair allegedly kidnapped the 17-year-old on April 8 at a hiking spot in Lichtenburg. "She was forced into prostitution, drugs and alcohol consumption."

Acting on a tip-off, the Hawks swooped on a prostitution den. Natasha Moncho, 22, and Mpho Sebati, 20, have appeared in court on abduction, rape, sexual exploitation and trafficking charges. - African News Agency (ANA)

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