

Here's why 'reduced crime' figures should worry us all

When the Uganda Police released their latest crime report showing a significant drop in reported cases, many citizens breathed a sigh of relief.

Figures were presented, reasons were offered, and for a moment it felt like progress. The streets, we were told, are becoming safer.

As a citizen who has watched this country struggle with insecurity for years, I wanted to join the chorus of praise. Bravo, police. Any reduction in crime is a step forward.

But before I sent for a cake, something in me refused to celebrate. Because numbers, especially police-reported numbers, can be misleading.

They tell us how many cases were logged at the stations, not how many crimes were actually committed in our neighbourhoods, markets, and homes.

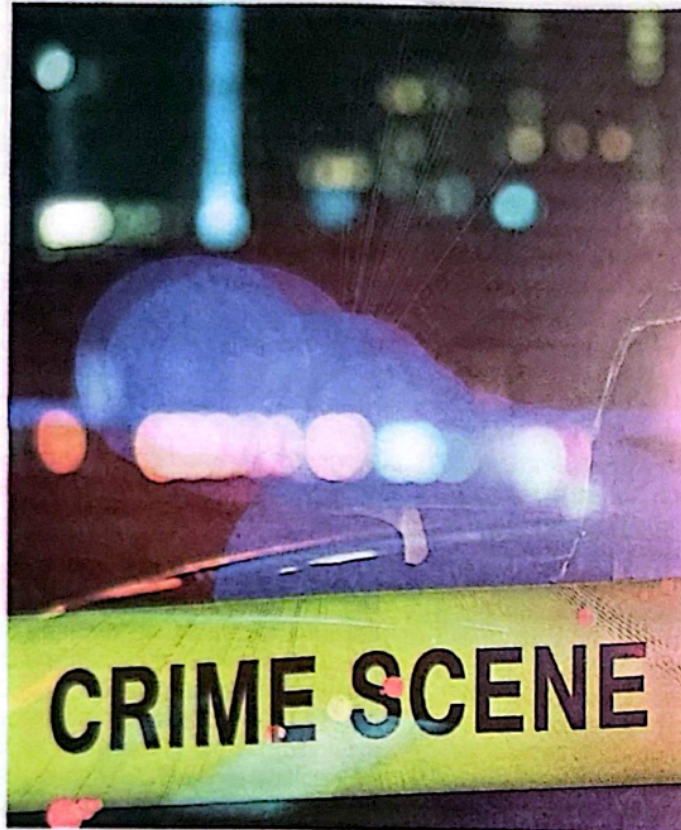
From where I sit, and from what I hear in conversations across Kampala and upcountry, the drop in reported crime may not mean citizens are safer. It may simply mean we have stopped believing that reporting crime makes any difference.

Let me be blunt: Some people have quietly given up on the police. Reporting a case has become an exercise in frustration, delay, and eventual disappointment.

You go to the station, you narrate your pain, you fill forms, and then you wait and wait. Investigations drag on for months, sometimes years. Witnesses are never called.

In the end, the complainant stops following up because the emotional and financial cost of chasing justice becomes heavier than the original loss.

A close friend captured this despair perfectly the other day. She had just lost his smartphone to a snatch thief in the



city. When I asked if she had reported the matter to the police, she laughed bitterly. "The only reason I can go there is to get that police report so I could replace my SIM card at the telecom office."

Her words stung because they echoed what I have heard from many other people.

This loss of faith is not abstract. I recently watched a video circulating on social media that left me both angry and heartbroken.

A concerned citizen, (or it was a media person?) asked a senior police spokesperson whether officers were investigating a violent gang fight that had erupted in broad daylight and was captured on camera. The response was chilling in its honesty: "No one has reported the case to us, so we have no interest."

No interest even when the incident was public, even when lives were at risk, even when the whole community had seen it.

The message was loud and clear: the police are not out there looking for crime.

They are sitting at the station waiting for someone brave or desperate enough to come and file a report.

This passive approach is dangerous. It creates a vicious cycle. Citizens stop reporting because they expect nothing. Police statistics look better because fewer cases are recorded.

The public then hears "crime is reducing" and assumes the problem is solved.

Meanwhile, criminals operate with greater confidence, knowing that the chances of anyone bothering to report them are slim.

We cannot keep congratulating ourselves on reduced reported crime without asking the harder question: why are our people no longer coming forward? Is it because they trust the system? Or because they have lost all hope in it?

A healthy society needs citizens who believe that justice is possible. When that belief dies, fear takes its place not just fear of criminals, but fear of a system that no longer serves the people it is meant to protect.

I am not saying the police have done nothing right. Many officers work tirelessly under difficult conditions.

Many stations have improved response times and community engagement. But good work by individuals cannot mask a deeper institutional problem: the growing perception that reporting crime is pointless.

Before we pop champagne over falling statistics, we must commission honest research into why reporting rates have dropped. We need to hear from ordinary citizens; not just in Kampala, but in Gulu, Mbale, Arua, and the villages where most crimes happen far from the spotlight.

We deserve a system where reporting to police about a lost phone etc. does not feel like a waste of time.

We deserve to feel safe enough to speak up. The numbers may look good on paper, but the silence on the streets tells a different story.

Until we address the reason behind that silence, the quiet surrender of citizens who no longer believe the police are on their side, we are not winning the war on crime.

We are simply losing the will to report it. And that, my fellow citizens, is a far more frightening statistic than any crime figure the police will ever release.

Christopher Kisekka,
Walkisekris@yahoo.com