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Regional News

The locals urge the police to intervene since they are no longer at ease.

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Residents of Masindi Town are living in fear following a surge in theft and burglary cases targeting homes and small businesses in several suburbs.

In just one week, more than 10 cases of break-ins have been reported in Katama, Kijura South, and Kijura Central in Masindi District, with criminals striking both during the day and at night.

Several residents told *Daily Monitor* that they now feel insecure in their own neighbourhoods. The thieves are reportedly operating within short distances of each other, sometimes only metres apart, and in some cases returning to the same areas on different days.

Motorcycles, phones, cash, and household items are among the most targeted property, while small businesses have suffered heavy losses.

In Katama Cell, Mr Joseph Ogaino, a landlord, said one of his tenants' houses was broken into at around 4pm last week while neighbours were going about their daily activities.

"I was shocked because the theft happened during the day. The thieves did not fear anyone. They just broke in and took property," he said on Tuesday.

Days later, Ms Madina Tuhaise, a teacher at Masindi Army Secondary School, discovered that her motorcycle had been stolen. Shortly after, another

Fear grips residents as crime wave hits Masindi



Police officers and leaders inspect one of the crime scenes where theft was reported in Mirya Central Division, Masindi Municipality, recently. PHOTO/ ISMAIL BATEGEKA

house in Katama was broken into, and a motorcycle belonging to Mr Geoffrey Gutoma, a well-known Master of Ceremonies in Masindi Town, was stolen.

The three incidents occurred within a radius of about 10 metres, although on different days, heightening fears that criminals are deliberately targeting the

same neighbourhood.

On Monday, thieves reportedly broke into a small shop near Katama boda boda stage, about 30 metres from the earlier incidents. All the merchandise was stolen from a shop, owned by an elderly woman who depends on it for survival.

The crime wave has spread beyond

Katama. In Kijura South, the house of newly-elected municipal youth councillor, Mr James Wakanda, was broken into five days ago, and his phone was stolen. In Kijura Central, near the former site of Grammar Primary School, a bar was also broken into at night and all items taken. Another victim, Ms Charity Atuhura, a journalist working with Bunyoro Broadcasting Services, reported that her shop was broken into and her phone and other household items were stolen.

Mr Joshua Asimwe, a resident, says the reported cases could represent only a fraction of the actual incidents, as some victims fear reporting to authorities or have lost hope of recovering their property.

Mr Issa Balinda, the Masindi Central Division chairperson-elect, on Monday said he recently witnessed an incident where an unknown assailant attacked a student of Masindi Secondary School and stole her phone and shoes.

Albertine North Region Police spokesperson Solomon Mugisa yesterday confirmed that police have registered multiple cases of theft and burglary in Masindi Town suburbs. He said patrols have been intensified, especially in the Central Division, and community policing efforts strengthened.

"We have registered many cases of theft and burglary in these areas. Police have intensified patrols and prioritised community policing to curb the crimes. We encourage people to keep reporting to the police," Mr Mugisa said.

He partly attributed the rising crime to unemployed youth who reject casual work and turn to theft for survival. He urged residents to remain vigilant and report suspicious individuals so that security agencies can respond quickly.

COMMUNITY APPEAL

Local leaders are now calling for the formation of community watch groups to help identify suspicious movements and protect neighbourhoods in Masindi Town. Business owners have also asked police to organise safety meetings to equip traders with practical measures to secure their premises.