MUKONO IN PANIC AS INSECURITY WORSENS

BY JOHN SEMAKULA AND HENRY NSUBUGA

The crime rate in Mukono district is on the rise. August 10, 2016 started like any other normal day for Patrick Onen, 34, a bodaboda cyclist in Mukono town. He went about his duties in the town peacefully until 11:00pm, when disaster struck.

As Onen returned from dropping off a passenger in the neigbouring Nasuti, an unknown assailant hiding in a roadside thicket jumped out and hit his head with a huge piece of wood.

"I fell and he came for my life and the motorcycle. He hit me until he thought I was dead, then he jumped on my motorcycle and sped off," Onen said.

Onen says he had just purchased the motorcycle on a loan at sh3m. Onen's rescuers, who saw him minutes after the attack, thought they were carrying a dead man to the Mukono Health Centre IV mortuary.

One of the rescuers even rang Onen's wife to ask her to arrange his burial. "But I 'resurrected' after spending two days in hospital, only that I lost some of my front teeth," Onen said.

He was discharged a week later and he is happy that he cheated death. Not so many people, who have been attacked like Onen in Mukono, have lived to tell their stories.

The clearest example was on Nabuti Road, where three people who were at a mobile money booth did not escape death when armed assailants struck recently. They were gunned down before their cash was carried away.

Assailants also attacked Kiwanga in Goma division recently and hacked two security guards; Godfrey Asiku and Muhammad Twinamatsiko, to death. Several residents were also injured in the Kiwanga attack and rushed to nearby health centres.



Relatives of Okongo (inset) mourning. Mukono residents live in fear due to the high crime rate in the district

LAST WEEK'S INCIDENTS

A more recent incident that has left residents in fear is one in which assailants attacked a Police post and killed a crime preventer, David Okongo, who was guarding Nakisunga Police Post.

In the same week, assailants attacked a vanilla factory in Lukojjo village, Nama sub-county and stole a gun from a Police officer, Isaac Kadaya, after beating and leaving him for dead.

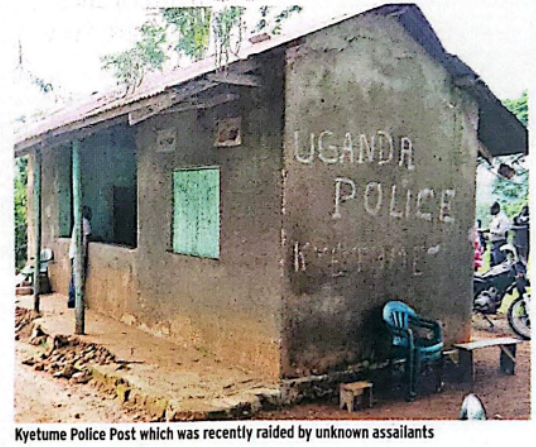
Mukono has been hit by a wave of crime ranging from car thefts to murders and robberies. Ibrah Batasi, the officer in charge of crime at Mukono Police division, told *Sunday Vision* that over six vehicles have been stolen in the district recently.

Allan Mawanda, the councillor for Namumira Anthony B in Mukono central division, told *Sunday Vision* that residents are worried that if thugs are killing Police officers who are supposed to protect them, the civilians may die in large numbers.

"Given the security situation, we may have to mobilise civilian patrols in the village to protect ourselves," Mawanda said. In the same vein, Nama sub-county chairperson, Elisa Ssebaale, expressed concern about the insecurity, but noted that unemployment, which has driven able-bodied youth into sports betting, may be the cause.

Ssebaale wondered where the youth, who spend all their time and cash in sports betting lounges, get the money to take care of their families. He also noted that the small number of Police officers vis-à-vis population size may be another reason for the increasing insecurity.

Juliet Tarida, the village chairperson for Kyetume, wondered why a Police post like Kyetume in Nakisunga that provides security to over 1,000 residents could have only three Police officers on duty.



Kyetume Police Post which was recently raided by unknown assailants

Authorities speak out

The Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson Emilian Kayima, told *Sunday Vision* that there might be laxity in security, which thugs take advantage of. He said the Police will not take the killings and stealing of guns lightly.

"We have beefed up security in Mukono with Kampala Metropolitan Police regional commander, Michael Musani Sabila currently camped in the district," he said.

Meanwhile, the Mukono resident district commissioner, Maj. David Matovu, asked residents to work with the Police by reporting suspects and accepting to act as witnesses in courts of law.

SECURITY IN DISBELIEF

Like the residents they are supposed to guard, security personnel in Mukono district are also puzzled by the attacks. *Sunday Vision* has learnt that the Police are particularly concerned that despite conducting a number of swoops to scale down crime, the rate is either persistent or surging.

Two of the suspects in a recent murder incident in Nakasajja Kyampisi sub-county were army officers identified as Sgt. Aaron Tumwesigye and Lance Corporal Robert Otim. The duo was recently charged in courts of law after being arrested in one of the Police swoops.

In another swoop the Police conducted in Butebe village, in Mukono town, a gang of juveniles that would waylay their victims even during day time before grabbing their belongings was also arrested.

Some of the gang members, who had started robbing cars, are now in Luzira Prison.

Sunday Vision has learnt that there are also emerging theories that the rogues, who terrorise Mukono, come from neighbouring districts of Wakiso and Kampala. The Kiwanga attack by machete-wielding men was said to have been instigated by a gang from Wakiso.

Security personnel believe that the criminals from Wakiso plan their missions during day and execute them in Mukono at night. Before the violent crimes hit Mukono, the district was only known for social crimes such as witchcraft and mob justice.

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