This comes amid rising cases of criminal activities across the city.

Teens among main suspects in Kampala gang crackdown

BY ANDREW BAGALA

Police have dismantled what authorities described as a hub for suspected criminal gangs along the Nakivubo Channel in Kampala, arresting 18 suspects during a joint security operation.

The suspects were picked up from makeshift structures erected along the drainage channel, which security agencies said had become a hideout for youths linked to a spate of robberies and attacks in the city.

The operation, conducted about a fortnight ago, involved the police, the army and enforcement officers from Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA).

Security personnel demolished the temporary shelters made of tarpaulins, plywood and iron sheets, which had been set up along the channel and nearby railway reserve land.

The structures, many of them marked with graffiti, bore inscriptions associated with street gangs.

The writings, some overlapping, included phrases such as De Baddest, Majilita Gasala Majje, Kabaka Champ de Boxer, Master Dog Lee, Gudo Skater, Black Jesus, Champ Kabaka, Mama Gaza, Young Money, and Naye Ggwe Tontya?

According to police, the shelters were occupied by youths suspected of involvement in criminal incidents along the Clock Tower stretch on Entebbe Road and the surrounding areas.



Some of the teenage suspects who were arrested during the raid last week. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

The 18 suspects arrested from the Nakivubo Channel are part of a wider crackdown in which 118 people were picked up across the Kampala Metropolitan Area in a single day.

Most of those arrested are aged between 12 and 20 years. Police said many of the suspects are linked to incidents of mugging, phone snatching and attacks on motorists during traffic congestion, especially in the central business district and along major roads.

Mr Luke Owoyesigyire, the Kampala Metropolitan Police deputy spokesperson, said security agencies targeted areas identified by the public as crime hotspots.

"The operations targeted hotspots that the public had pointed to as infested by criminals. There has been public outcry that thugs were snatching mobile phones and attacking commuters during traffic rush hours," Mr Owoyesigyire said.

During the operation, police recovered several items believed to have been used in criminal activities. These included knives, hammers and suspected narcotic drugs.

Mr Owoyesigyire said some suspects target parked vehicles, particularly in residential areas at night, removing number plates and later demanding money from the owners for their return.

A key suspect was arrested and led police to the recovery of more than 100 stolen number plates.

Authorities say the vice is not limited to Kampala. Similar incidents have been reported along Entebbe Road and in Entebbe Municipality in Wakiso District. Kisubi, Mpala and Abayita Ababiri townships have been identified as some of the most affected areas.

Police statistics indicate that since the beginning of the year, nearly 10,000 suspects have been arrested in operations conducted across the country.

In Kampala's central business district, many of the suspects are young people accused of snatching mobile phones and handbags from pedestrians and motorists. Police say a number of the suspects are youths who migrated from upcountry areas in search of better opportunities but ended up living on the streets.

AT A GLANCE

The 2025 police statistics show a 10.2 percent decrease in total crime, with 196,405 cases registered, down from 218,715 in 2024. Of these, 79,291 cases were taken to court, resulting in 24,899 convictions. Major crimes involved homicides, robbery, and theft, particularly in urban areas.

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