

Crime is being normalised, and consequences are weakening

These days, it does not take long before you hear another violent crime story.

Someone is hit with a paver and dies. A boda boda passenger is trailed and robbed of a laptop or phone. A family is raided by thieves armed with machetes. A student is attacked and strangled.

Not long ago, such incidents would have shocked the public because they felt exceptional. Today, they are becoming alarmingly ordinary. Life somehow just moves on until the next incident.

And perhaps the most frightening part of it all is not just the crimes themselves, but how familiar they are beginning to feel.

Today, videos of violent crime circulate online so frequently that many people watch briefly, shake their heads, and move on, as they just hope not to become the next victims. Our society is slowly adjusting to what should never feel normal.

And sometimes, the response goes further than indifference. Incidents that should provoke outrage instead become raw material for humor. Memes are made. Stickers are created. TikTok content is coined from the very moments that others are crying over. Songs follow. And somehow, everyone laughs; as long as it did not happen to them.

This is perhaps the most telling sign of how deep the desensitisation has gone. When a society begins to find comedy in its own suffering, it is not coping; it is surrendering.

Even public spaces now feel different. Public reactions toward crime have changed. There are many incidents where someone is attacked in full view of others, yet inter-



vention does not occur. Not necessarily because people do not care, but because fear has spread.

Too many now believe that helping could simply turn them into the next victim. And criminals appear to understand this fear very well; they are exploiting it.

At the same time, there is a growing perception that violent offenders are not sufficiently discouraged. When similar crimes continue to occur repeatedly, it triggers serious questions. Are offenders truly afraid of the law? Are punishments certain enough to discourage repetition? Or are criminals becoming bolder because the risks no longer feel consistent or severe?

Crime now appears to carry limited risk in the minds of many offenders and, as a result, violent robberies have become more organised and daring. Public fear has deepened, while confidence in security agencies has gradually weakened.

This fear is not confined to the streets alone. There is also a worrying rise in cases of child disappearances and abductions.

Every so often, missing-child announcements circulate widely on WhatsApp and social media. A child "disappears" on the way home. Another is reported missing after what should have been a normal day. Families then appeal desperately for help, hoping someone somewhere might know something about their children's whereabouts.

Every time these announcements appear, I am reminded of the painful abduction and killing of baby Kham Kakama more than 15 years ago, and the equally tragic case of Susan Magara, who was abducted for ransom and later brutally killed despite efforts to secure her release.

These cases are not isolated tragedies. They are part of the same pattern: a society where violent crime is becoming bolder, and where victims, whether

on a street downtown or walking home from school, share the same vulnerability.

Over time, such cases have shaped how society now thinks and behaves. Parents are more anxious when children leave home. Citizens are more suspicious of anything and everything. Public spaces now feel less safe. Any movement now comes with fear.

And to be honest, many citizens are losing confidence in security institutions. This is why there is an urgent need not only for enforcement, but for visible and consistent consequences for offenders.

The aim is not just punishment for its own sake, but the restoration of public confidence. Crime must once again become a high-risk venture with serious consequences.

Because once crime starts feeling ordinary, society begins adjusting to living in fear. And once that adjustment becomes permanent, insecurity stops feeling strange. It starts feeling like normal life.

That should not be acceptable. Security agencies must treat these growing fears with the seriousness they deserve, not just with arrests, but with prosecutions that follow through and sentences that are visible enough to remind both offenders and citizens that the law still carries weight, and is very much at work. Citizens should not have to structure their daily lives around anxiety and constant risk calculations. That is not a society anyone should settle for.

Peter Bukama Mulinzi,
Software developer.
pbmulinzi@gmail.com