

Schools become war zones as shots ring out

Lack of security grave threat to children's lives in Helenvale

Siyamtanda Capa, Athena O'Reilly and Yoliswa Sobuwa
capas@timesmedia.co.za

TWO Helenvale schools - situated in the heart of gang territory - have become war zones, with three shooting incidents on the grounds in less than three weeks.

The incidents have left pupils and teachers fearing for their lives as minimal security at the schools continues to be a matter of grave concern.

Meanwhile, a teacher at Gertrude Shope was left traumatised after she was robbed at gunpoint on the school premises earlier this month.

Parents halted teaching for a week, demanding that the Department of Education take their call for more security seriously.

Teaching resumed on Tuesday after the department agreed to employ a security guard and upgrade the school's fence.

Two parents at Hillcrest Primary School, Prilene Roussouw, 42, and Sharon Komoeto, 44, said they worried every day about their children's safety.

"The teachers are forced to lock the doors. My biggest concern is that some parents go to the school during the shootings and demand to take their children home," Roussouw said.

Komoeto said at times she did not know if she should send her two children - in grades 3 and 6 - to school or keep them at home as



HELP NEEDED: Hillcrest Primary School parent Prilene Roussouw in front of a wall protesting against the violence. Picture: FREDLIN ADIRIAAN

"The strangest thing is that life just returns to normal a few minutes later. That is concerning.

"We are trying our best to ensure the safety of our children. Another method we introduced is the 'walking bus' where a group of mothers walk with the children in the morning and afternoons. This is helping."

Northern Areas Education Forum secretary Richard Draal said it was a known fact that the children in these areas were not safe.

"It is a serious issue. Sadly nothing is being done to assist with the safety of these pupils," Draal said.

to be named, said the violent incidents on the school premises were a result of outside elements spilling over onto the playground.

"As teachers, we need to be alert because our pupils, especially from the township areas, are being mugged on a daily basis," she said.

Only half of the school's fencing was complete, which allowed easy access for criminals, she said.

Three weeks ago, a Schauderville school teacher's life was on the line, facing a firearm to protect a pupil during a dispute.

"It is a reality that people are being shot in the streets. Gangsters enter the school grounds and shoot," Van Rensburg said.

"The principal and the teachers are under siege by some pupils and the gangs.

"If you are being threatened by things like that, plus what you have seen happening around you, it's unbearable that you can continue teaching in such circumstances while nothing is being done to address it."

Department spokesman Malibonwe Mtima said the department

IN BRIEF

Robberies at pub, Govan Mbeki cafe

SIX gunmen, their faces covered in calamine lotion, robbed the 24-hour Funchal Cafe in Govan Mbeki Avenue at the weekend.

Police spokeswoman Captain Sandra Jansen van Rensburg said the 43-year-old cashier was forced to lie on the ground during the incident.

"Three of the suspects jumped over the counter and held her at gunpoint," Jansen van Rensburg said.

"The robbers ransacked the shelves, emptied the tills and stole small items, including cigarettes."

In another incident at about 1 am on Saturday, a man was robbed while walking to his car in the car park of the Glendore Arms in Glendore Road.

"As the man was walking to his car, three men approached and hauled out firearms and threatened the man," Jansen van Rensburg said.

"They took his wallet as well as his cellphone, before running off into the nearby bushes."

Suspected gangster wounded in shooting

A DRIVE-BY shooting in Jameson Road, Schauderville, at about 11 pm on Saturday, left a suspected gangster wounded.

The shooting took place outside a known drug post in the street.

One man has been arrested. Police spokeswoman Colonel Priscilla Naidu said the 23-year-old victim, who is not being named for his protection, had been sitting with a friend on the pavement outside the house when a white BMW drove past.

"According to witnesses, a gunman in the back seat started waving the gun around and shooting."

"One person was shot in the leg," Naidu said the motive for the shooting was not known at this stage.

She said the suspect, 45, would appear in the Port Elizabeth Magistrate's Court tomorrow on two counts of attempted murder. - Gareth Wilson

Tik worth R30m seized at airport

CRYSTAL methamphetamine (tik) worth about R30-million has been confiscated at OR Tambo International Airport.

SA Revenue spokesman Sandile Memela said the shipment was sent from Cameroon via Istanbul on a flight from Turkey to Johannesburg.

Memela said the drugs were found