



NUMSA is deeply disturbed by the war against children in our society
4 June 2025
Press statement

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is deeply disturbed by recent reports of violence against children. It is ironic that some of the most horrific reports on crimes against children are emerging during *Child Protection Week* which is from the 29th of May to the 5th of June. Just this week, we have been exposed to a number of terrible media reports about the kidnapping and murder of children.

NUMSA wishes to send its deepest condolences to the families of these children who have joined the ranks of millions of other victims of violence in South Africa. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families whose lives have been devastated by the loss of their children.

This week, fifty-year old sangoma, Sebokoana Khounyana appeared in the Vanderbijlpark Magistrates Court on Monday on charges of pre-meditated murder and child trafficking of two year old Kutlwano Shalaba. It is alleged the sangoma and the child's mother, Kuneuwe Portia Shalaba, murdered the little girl on the 10th of November 2024. Following investigations by the police, the sangoma confessed to the murder and showed the police where she had buried the child's body in Waterpan. She was arrested on the 29th of May 2025. It is alleged that Kutlwano's mother poisoned and killed her because she was born female, instead of male. It seems Kutlwano's mother wanted a boy and did not want her family to know that she had given birth to a girl. And so she took the life of her own child. Kutlwano's mother has also been charged with premeditated murder.

On Sunday the body of 14-year-old Likhona Fose was found after she had been reported missing by her family in Braamfischerville. Her mutilated body was discovered in a nearby open field. The little girl had been badly beaten before she died. Her killers have not yet been found.

In a separate incident, the mother of six-year-old Joshlin Smith, (Kelly Smith), and her boyfriend Jacquen "Boeta" Appollis, and their friend Steveno van Rhyn, were sentenced to life in prison on charges of kidnapping and human trafficking for the disappearance of little girl. The trio were convicted in connection with her disappearance. It emerged in court that Joshlin was allegedly sold to a traditional healer for R20 000 who reportedly wanted the child, for her eyes and light skin. The sentence was handed down on the 30th of May. Unfortunately, Joshlin is still missing and has yet to be found, because none of the accused was willing to testify in court, to explain what happened to her.

We could go on and on listing the terrible stories which reflect the brutal, violent attacks on our children. It makes one question the relevance of 'Child Protection Week', if we are not going to do what is necessary, to protect our children.

The statistics reflect a shocking record. In the second quarter of 2024, 315 children were killed and this is an increase of 7,5% compared to the same period, the year before. This means that violence against children is increasing and worsening. According to a report by UNICEF published in November 2023, *"At least 3 children are murdered, another 3 survive attempted*

murder and 21 suffer grievous bodily harm. That's the average daily impact of violence against children in South Africa".

What is clear is that as a society we are failing in our primary duty, which is to protect our children. Our children are not safe anywhere, they are not even safe in their own homes.

This brutal reality is not isolated, it is the direct result of a system that places profit before people. Under capitalism, inequality thrives, communities are neglected, and the most vulnerable, our children, pay the highest price. A society driven by greed, exploitation, and economic exclusion creates desperate conditions where violence festers. The commodification of human life, the normalization of suffering, and the abandonment of social responsibility are the signs of capitalist decay.

What is to be done?

1. Tackle poverty, unemployment and inequality directly. Joblessness and desperation contribute to the crisis. One of the easiest things the government can do to boost employment, is to fix State Owned Entities so they can be engine drivers of the economy. SOE's play a role in creating value chains and creating jobs and this can help to drive the economy.
2. Create early intervention programs where more social workers are employed to work with communities and provide parental support services. This can prevent abuse before it escalates
3. Organise parental support groups in communities with social worker who are trained to help and advise parents with their children, and also, with their family relationships. This should also include couples counselling, conflict management and anger management.
4. Encourage the community to play an active role in reporting abuse so that intervention with social workers and the police can occur.
5. Have more specialized units within the police services to protect children and investigate child related crimes.

NUMSA stands firmly in the belief that socialism is the only path toward a just and humane society. Socialism does not view children as collateral damage in the pursuit of wealth. Socialism prioritizes human dignity, economic fairness, and the protection of the most vulnerable.

Until we dismantle the brutal capitalist system and implement a more humane, human-centred approach, the war against our children will rage on.

ENDS

Issued on behalf of NUMSA
Puleng Phaka
NUMSA 2nd Deputy President

For more information, please contact:

Phakamile Hlubi-Majola
NUMSA National Spokesperson
0833767725
phakamileh@numsa.org.za

NUMSA Head Office number: 0116891700

NUMSA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NumsaSocial>

NUMSA Twitter account: [@Numsa Media](#)

NUMSA Website: <https://numsa.org.za/>