

We need to pay heed to school security guidelines

Ugandans are still coming to terms with the horrific scenes that unfolded at Ggaba Early Childhood Development Program School in Makindye Division, Kampala City, on Thursday, when a male suspect brutally stabbed and killed four children.

The suspect disguised himself as a parent looking for admission for his child. He was welcomed and taken through the admission process.

Two days later, he packed four kitchen knives and visited the school again. He walked past the school gate with ease and even entered the administration block without any security check.

After paying Shs180,000 for the admission, he stepped outside, locked the gate, and began attacking children one after another, leaving four dead.

The issue:

School security.

Our view:

Thursday's unfortunate incident reminds us that the government now has the burden to ensure that the security guidelines are actually implemented.

Teachers quickly raised the alarm, prompting the suspect to attempt an escape. However, he was apprehended by a security guard from the nearby Ggaba Community Church.

Angry residents set a fire at the scene in protest after security operatives rescued the suspect. Security personnel, including police and army officers, were forced to fire warning shots into the air to disperse the crowd.

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Abas Byakagaba, who rushed to the scene moments after receiving reports of the attack, called for calm as security operatives conduct investigations. Police are yet to establish the motive of the attack.

The incident raises questions about the safety of children at school. Following the numerous school fires that caused loss of precious lives and properties, the government in 2022 issued stringent guidelines for schools to follow, which included security policies.

Some of the guidelines include drawing up and implementing safety and security measures, having controlled access to premises by putting in place a secure and non-porous perimeter fence high enough to prevent illegal entry and exit, guards at schools, restricted entry to key installations such as student dormitories, kitchen, water sources, and food stores.

Unfortunately, issuing guidelines is not all there is. Thursday's unfortunate incident reminds us that the government now has the burden to ensure that the guidelines are actually implemented and in a meaningful way.

However, ensuring the safety of children in schools cannot be left to the government only, after all, it is our children's lives at stake here. Learners, parents and every other stakeholder should be encouraged to blow the whistle on any school that does not follow the said guidelines.

For years, police has been warning owners of educational facilities to implement security guidelines. Key among them is ensuring that every person accessing the premises is searched to ensure that he or she hasn't turned up with deadly weapons. The incident at Makindye reminds us of the importance of following the guidelines.

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