Upsurge in rape, robbery cases sends fears into KWASU students

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Upsurge in rape, robbery cases sends fears into KWASU students  
  
The wave of insecurity rocking Kwara State University (KWASU) in Malete has raised fresh concerns over the safety of students on and off campus. From reported rape cases to routine armed robbery, theft and hostel burglary, students feel increasingly unsafe and abandoned by the authorities and the Students’ Union. HALIMAH BALOGUN (KWASU) reports.  
  
•We are on top of the situation, says mgt  
  
In recent weeks, several students of Kwara State University (KWASU) have taken to social media and private conversations to share their traumatic experiences at the hands of thieves, rapists, and suspected cultists terrorising Malete, the host community of the institution. This outpouring of distress signals a growing urgency for the university’s leadership, local authorities, and the broader community to recognise the severity of the situation and take meaningful action.  
  
Students recount experience  
  
A female student, who insisted on anonymity, shared how she was raped during a robbery in her hostel. “Keep me anonymous, please, because it’s a shameful thing.  
  
‘‘A thief came to my hostel, collected my phone and ATM card, raped me, and ran away. Malete police were unable to do anything about it-they just told me to go and treat myself,” she said.  
  
According to her, the incident has left indelible marks on her mental health as she faces tension whenever she hears a knock on her door.  
  
A 300-Level student of Engineering simply identified as Busayo recounted the story of her friend who was allegedly raped overnight.  
  
“She called me the next morning and told me to take her to the hospital. At first, I thought she was sick, but when I got to her place, she broke down and said an unknown guy raped her. She cried for help, but nobody heard her,” she said.  
  
A 100-Level student of Mass communication, Tope Hassan said she had been hearing stories of motorcyclists allegedly purposely going off the route and into the bush to harass female students but she was indifferent about it until it happened to her.  
  
She said: “ I was on my way to my friend’s hostel to charge my phone, you know how electricity in this part of the state is epileptic…so I took a bike and I told him I was going to Safari from Westend, everything was going fine until he started moving towards the bush side, I questioned him and he said he wanted to take a short cut but I insisted that since I was going to to pay him his full fare, he shouldn’t take that route, he refused and started speeding up, I was shouting on the bike but nobody really heard. Immediately he got to the bush side, he slowed down and I used that opportunity to jump off the bike and ran to my destination. In the process of trying to flee, I dropped my phone and all my belongings. About 20 minutes later, after I got to my friend’s place, I explained what happened and we decided to go there to see if I could still find my belongings but when we got there, lo and behold, the man was still waiting there, probably knowing that I might come for my things. When we saw him, we started shouting, people were coming towards us and when he noticed that, he sped off. I was lucky, but from the stories I’ve heard, a lot of other girls have not been so lucky, it’s just so scary.”  
  
For many other students, the threat comes in the form of constant burglary.  
  
A 300-Level student of Library and Information Science , Alabi Ibrahim said:“Four rooms were burgled in my hostel  
  
‘‘Two iPhones, one Samsung, one button phone, and one laptop were stolen. Later I heard that other rooms were also affected.  
  
Another student simply identified as Peter said: “Why is there insecurity every day and night, but there’s hardly any security even one day a week? It’s like money is more important than our safety. Armed robbers are everywhere, and the school isn’t doing anything. I’m in my final year but with the way things are going, I might end up dropping out because my life is more important than education.”  
  
A 200-Level student of Public Health did not hold back in her outrage: “Malete is turning into something else. What type of student union do we even have? The only thing they know is to monitor nails, eyelashes, and indecent dressing. What about our safety? Those police are a story for another day. They’re in Malete and all this is happening’’.  
  
One student took to WhatsApp to express his frustration: “This issue of robbery every day in Malete is beyond the power of Malete police station alone. Why? KWASU students are more than 45,000. Non-students are more than 20,000. Private hostels in Malete are more than 5,000. But the number of police officers is not up to 100. And most hostels don’t even have private security. Landlords and vigilance groups are not helping either.”  
  
According to a 500-Level student, identified simply as Tobi, beyond the worsening insecurity, there has been a noticeable decline in the university’s overall management and structure.  
  
He said: “Beyond the security issues, KWASU is beginning to look like a name without real substance. The level of mismanagement is alarming, and the current state of things is nothing compared to what we had before. This wasn’t the case in previous years.”  
  
An alumnus of KWASU, Temiloluwa Agbeniga, expressed concern over the deteriorating situation in Malete.  
  
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“Well, in recent times, we have been receiving countless news of theft that has now grown into armed robbery rampaging my alma mater. It’s disheartening. It has affected a number of students and left them in trauma. Some have lost their gadgets and other valuables. From reports, I heard that this evil is being carried out by some former or ungraduated students and even non-students who disguise themselves as one of us. There are also rumours that some of these crimes are being committed by herdsmen and bike riders.”  
  
According to him, although theft has long been a concern in Malete, the current wave especially over the last three months has been more severe.  
  
“However, there have also been successes. The Malete Police Division, the school’s safety unit, and some community vigilance groups have intercepted several planned robberies. One of such incidents happened overnight on June 21 and 22 in the Westend area. Finally, we are pleading with the school management, the state government, and the Federal Government to look into this issue and help the student community. To the students at large, while I sympathise with those affected, others should be rest assured that measures are being taken to restore peace in Malete,” he added.  
  
Police react  
  
When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Kwara State Command, SP Adetoun Ejire-Adeyemi expressed concern over the rape case, promising to investigate further.  
  
“If you report it at the police station and they said she should go home and treat herself when? When did this happen? Can you tell me? Can you link me with the victim?” she asked.  
  
“I want to know the day she went to the police station and whom she complained to. I want to take up the case from there. How can a rape victim go to a police station and she’s just told to treat herself? I don’t believe that part.  
  
Make her call me. If she can’t, she should chat me up via WhatsApp. I’ll be expecting a call.  
  
Please help me with that one,” she added.  
  
She also admitted the police were aware of ongoing burglary cases and were working with the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Malete to improve security.  
  
“I’ve been getting complaints about burglary and housebreaking. I’ve spoken to the DPO. He told me that they go on patrol at night. I also suggested forming a neighbourhood watch, that would help to track suspicious movements. The police are working, but yes, this rape case is particularly disturbing and I’m interested in getting to the bottom of it,” she said.  
  
School imposes restrictions, insists ‘we are on top of the situation’  
  
In a follow-up release from the University Relations Directorate, Acting Director of University Relations, Dr Saeedat Aliyu noted that a stakeholders meeting has been urgently held to address the situation.  
  
According to her, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Shaykh-Luqman Alade Jimoh, who presided over the meeting, stressed the importance of student safety and stated that decisive measures would be enforced to stem the tide of insecurity.  
  
She added that while praising the Malete community and security agents for their ongoing support, the VC urged students and residents to remain vigilant and report all suspicious activity to law enforcement agencies.  
  
The statement read: “Chairperson of the Moro Local Government Council, Hajia Mariam Abdulwasiu, present at the meeting, pledged additional support from the local authority. She announced that the council would formalise the newly adopted movement restrictions into law, employ 10 more vigilance group members equipped with modern security tools, donate a transformer to improve public electricity supply, and erect gates at entry points into the town to monitor nighttime movement. She also disclosed that the council had donated N1 million to victims of the most recent robbery incident.  
  
Additional measures include the establishment of a joint security committee comprising representatives from the university, Malete community, student union, and security agencies. All private hostels are now expected to engage professional security personnel, and the community is to work closely with vigilance groups for improved response to threats.”  
  
In an earlier statement, the university management, through the Registrar, Dr Kikelomo W. Sallee, had assured students that efforts were underway to curb insecurity.  
  
The statement read: “The Management of Kwara State University, Malete, wishes to bring to the notice of students resident in Malete and other concerned members of the public that decisive steps have been taken to forestall any repeat of the robbery attacks on some private hostels in Malete.  
  
A joint patrol of the Police, Civil Defence Corps, and the community police has been put in place to patrol the Malete community, while a stakeholders meeting will hold to find a lasting solution to the incessant robbery incidents disturbing the peace of KWASU students off-campus.  
  
‘‘Management urges all KWASUITES to remain calm and not to take the laws into their hands. Security agents are already in every part of Malete, and students are to go about their lawful business without fear.”  
  
SU president declines comment  
  
The President of the Student Union (SU), Babatunde Kewulere, however, declined to give any concrete response over the phone.  
  
“This is not a conversation I would like to have on the phone. Anybody could call and claim to be from a newspaper. We are dealing with students and we can’t afford for this issue to escalate further. If students are complaining, we want to know who exactly is complaining and through what channel.  
  
“There are certain steps we’ve taken already, but these things are sensitive. Perhaps if you can send your representative to the school or through official correspondence, we can respond. But not via a random call,” he said.