

MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
02 MAY 2026

**MEC MATHYE CONDEMNS BARBARIC MURDER OF 16-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN PHARARE,
CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION ON KIDNAPPED 2-YEAR-OLD OMPHILE SETHOLE**

POLOKWANE – Limpopo MEC for Transport and Community Safety, Ms. Violet Mathye, has expressed shock and outrage at the brutal murder of a 16-year-old girl in Pharare Village and the kidnapping of 2-year-old Omphile Sethole from Ga-Mabuela Village, both reported on 01 and 02 May 2026 respectively.

“These are barbaric, cowardly attacks on the most vulnerable among us. We are sickened,” said MEC Mathye. “A 16-year-old girl beheaded in the bush. A 2-year-old baby stolen from her grandmother’s bed at 02h00. This is not the Limpopo we are building. This is not the South Africa our Constitution promised our children 30 years ago.”

CHILD PROTECTION MONTH: FROM PROMISE TO ACTION

These horrific incidents occur as South Africa marks Child Protection Month 2026 this May, under the theme “Working together in ending violence against children.” The campaign launches tomorrow, 03 May, in KwaZulu-Natal.

“Child Protection Month is not a slogan. It is a line in the sand,” stated MEC Mathye. “With 8,984 child abuse cases reported last financial year and statutory rape increasing to 199 cases, we are in a crisis. The Constitution we celebrate on 8 May 1996 gave every child the right to protection. Today, Omphile is missing. Today, a family in Pharare is planning a funeral. We must act.”

ARREST AND INVESTIGATION: PHARARE MURDER

MEC Mathye welcomed the swift arrest of a 17-year-old boy by the Provincial Murder and Robbery Unit, Mopani Tracking Team and Maake Detectives. The suspect, currently hospitalised, has been linked to the murder and a weapon has been confiscated.

“We commend SAPS for acting fast. But let this be clear: If you harm a child in Limpopo, we will find you. If you are a child who harms another child, the Child Justice Act will still hold you accountable.”

URGENT APPEAL: HELP FIND OMPHILE SETHOLE

MEC Mathye echoed Provincial Commissioner Lt Gen Thembi Hadebe’s call for public assistance to find 2-year-old Omphile Sethole, kidnapped from Ga-Mabuela Village, Tinmyne policing area.

“Omphile was wearing a pink jersey and black tights. She was taken while her grandmother slept. I am calling on every community member, every taxi driver, every spaza shop owner: If you see a child who looks like Omphile, if you heard something, if you know something — come forward. Silence protects criminals, not children.”

Report immediately to:
Sgt Moshe Mashaba: 082 319 9448
Crime Stop: 08600 10111
Nearest Police Station or MySAPS App

MEC TO VISIT BEREAVED FAMILY

MEC Mathye will visit the family of the 16-year-old victim in Pharare Village, Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, on Tuesday, 05 May 2026 at 15h00 to convey condolences and assess support needed.

“To the family of Pharare: We mourn with you. To the family of Omphile: We search with you. To the people of Limpopo: Child Protection Month starts with us. In our homes. On our streets. In our silence or in our speaking out.”

The Department of Transport and Community Safety will intensify joint operations with SAPS during May, focusing on crimes against children and women, in line with Child Protection Month and the Constitution’s 30-year promise of safety for all.

END

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