

SitRep

Mapping extremism and gang violence: A county-level scan of Kenya's security landscape

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Situation Report

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1. Introduction

Kenya faced a surge of complex, overlapping security threats between April and June 2025, spanning militant attacks, state-linked protest violence, and localised gang activity. This report analyses three key fronts of insecurity: Al-Shabaab's deadly ambush in Lamu, the alleged deployment of paid political goons to suppress civic protests in Nairobi, and the rise of violent criminal gangs in counties like Busia, Mombasa, and Nakuru.

In April 2025, Al-Shabaab militants ambushed Special Operations Group (SOG) police in Lamu's Boni Forest. Online responses were starkly polarised. While some mourned the officers, many users mocked their deaths or showed indifference, drawing direct comparisons to the state's own violent suppression of 2024 anti-tax protests. Social media users repurposed dismissive comments by political leaders like member of parliament (MP) Bashir Abdullahi's 'people are killed all the time' remark.

The June 2025 nationwide protests demanding justice for the death of blogger Albert Ojwang in police custody escalated amid widespread claims that state actors paid goons to sabotage the demonstrations. Political actors regularly hire unemployed youth who face a national unemployment rate of 12.7% and an even higher rate of 67% among those aged 15 to 34, to act as enforcers, disrupt protests, intimidate and sabotage rival campaigns. This practice, well-documented during the 2022 elections, continues to evolve. Social media analysis between 11 and 24 June recorded over 15,480 mentions of 'police and goons' on X alone. This anger intensified after police shot dead street vendor Boniface Kariuki during protests on 17 June 2025, with graphic footage widely shared online.

Beyond the capital, in Busia, Mombasa, and Nakuru counties, criminal gang activity has strained local security forces. In Busia's Butula constituency, residents used Facebook to demand action against repeated armed robberies, livestock thefts, and attacks. In Nakuru, a string of violent robberies and fatal clashes with police led to a special unit deployment from Nairobi. Meanwhile, in coastal counties, the machete-wielding Panga Boys gang continued to terrorise Kilifi, Kwale, and Mombasa.

Other drivers of violence and insecurity include:

- a. Busia and Homa Bay face [poverty](#), [climate-related shocks](#), and weak infrastructure. Busia is now considered a [hot spot](#) for radicalisation, with youth drawn to extremist ideologies due to economic desperation. Poor governance has also been [linked to](#) the spread of extremist ideologies in rural Kenya.
- b. According to the Criminal Gangs and Elections in Kenya report by Enact, more than 90% of gangs in the country [engage](#) in [electoral](#) activities as enforcers, [vote riggers](#), saboteurs, or crowd mobilisers.

- c. Extremist groups such as Al-Shabaab recruit disenfranchised youth using promises of jobs or cash. Research has shown that many youth [join](#) extremist groups not for ideological reasons but due to [financial need](#), peer influence, or a need for protection.
- d. Kenya has laws, such as the [Prevention of Organised Crime Act \(2010\)](#) and the [Election Campaign Finance Act \(2013\)](#), intended to prevent the political use of gangs; however, enforcement remains weak. A [National Crime Research Centre \(NCRC\) report](#) found that more than 326 organised criminal groups operate nationwide, often with political backing, especially during elections to intimidate opponents and disrupt events. While low-level gang members are sometimes arrested, their political sponsors rarely face prosecution. Experts [recommend](#) reforms to close legal loopholes that protect these powerful backers.

2. Insurgency: Al-Shabaab attacks and extremist recruitment

a. Growing public disillusionment with state institutions in Lamu county

On 29 April 2025, Al-Shabaab militants [attacked](#) police officers from the [SOG](#) in the Boni forest in Lamu county, killing five officers and injuring eight others. The incident was mentioned 2,510 times on X and received 949,343 views between 30 April and 05 May 2025. On Facebook, 296 posts about the attack were made within the same period, providing secondary accounts of the incident. These posts received 2.5 million views and 30,792 reactions. While some X users expressed [sympathy](#) and [respect](#) for the fallen officers, others blamed president William Ruto for the ambush and expressed [hostility](#) towards the police. Other users [celebrated](#) and [mocked](#) the attack, showing indifference to the loss of life.

These reactions were particularly prominent in responses to X posts by media outlets [Capital FM](#) and [Citizen TV](#), which reported on the ambush. Capital FM's [post](#) received 1,049 mentions and 248,730 views, while Citizen TV's [post](#) garnered 947 mentions and 159,111 views between 30 April and 05 May 2025. Many of the responses to these posts were dismissive of the killings, critical of the police force, or emotionally detached from the officers' deaths.



Screenshot of an X post [expressing](#) hostility towards the police and calling for their deaths (Source: CfA using X)

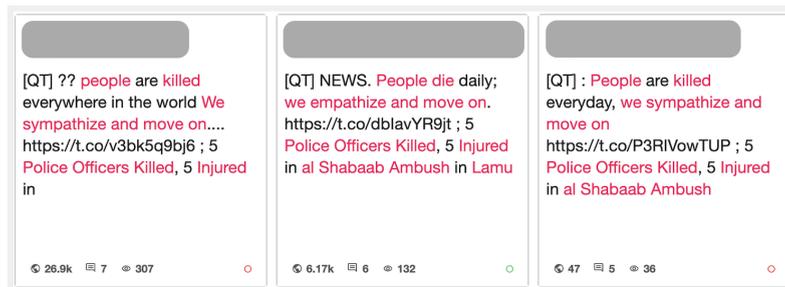


Screenshot of an X post [warning](#) about rising public support for militant violence and the celebration of police deaths (Source: CfA using X)

Prominent posts questioned why police seemed unable to prevent militant attacks, yet responded with excessive force against peaceful domestic protesters. These criticisms drew stark comparisons to the 2024 anti-finance bill demonstrations, where security forces were accused of killing and injuring protesters.

Social media users seized on past statements by Kenyan leaders to argue that the state’s own indifference to civilian deaths meant the public owed no sympathy for fallen police officers.

Mandera North MP Abdullahi’s 29 April 2025 [remark](#) dismissing the BBC’s Blood Parliament documentary, ‘people are killed all the time; we [sympathize](#) and move on’, became a central reference point. In 49 posts with over 10,000 views, users turned his words back on the government, suggesting that police deaths deserved exactly the same cold disregard shown toward protesters killed in 2024.



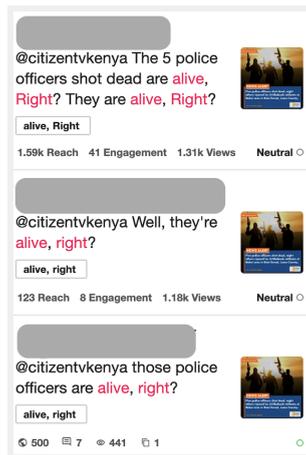
Screenshots of sample X posts featuring variations of Abdullahi’s statement (Source: CfA via Meltwater)

Similarly, Kikuyu MP [Kimani Ichung’wah’s](#) 2024 claim that missing government critics had merely ‘[faked](#)’ their own abductions was [repurposed](#) in 13 X mentions with 1,096 views. Users said that the slain officers might be ‘faking’ their deaths.

President Ruto’s [notorious](#) ‘That boy is alive, right?’ [comment](#) made after a 12-year-old protester was [killed](#) in 2024 was also revived on X. In 27 mentions, with nearly 4,000 views, users used the phrase to suggest that government leaders had set a precedent of callous indifference, and that the public was simply reflecting that attitude back toward the state’s own security forces.



Screenshot of sample X posts referencing Ichung’wah’s claim that missing individuals were hiding in short-term rentals (Source: CfA via Meltwater)



Screenshot of sample X posts featuring variations of Ruto's remark (Source: CfA via Meltwater)

Beyond sarcasm and criticism, some users openly [endorsed](#) militant violence. The posts said Al-Shabaab should have killed more personnel and were actually ‘[underworking](#)’ and ‘[weak](#).’ Other users [congratulated](#) them and suggested that they should have [killed more](#) security personnel, with 25 posts accumulating over 10,600 views supporting the notion that the ambush served as a warning or deserved punishment.



Screenshot of an X post [celebrating](#) the killings of police officers in the ambush (Source: CfA using X)

Several posts criticised the police for perceived [incompetence](#) in preventing the ambush, contrasting this failure with their [aggressive crackdown](#) on peaceful protesters during the 2024 anti-finance bill demonstrations. Users questioned why the police deployed excessive force against civilians but appeared ineffective against real security threats. Some users also [condemned](#) the government for arresting four filmmakers it claimed were involved in producing the BBC documentary on 02 May 2025, rather than addressing national security concerns.

There were a total of 15 such mentions that accumulated 13,503 views and 136 engagements.



Screenshot of an X post [criticising](#) police brutality during protests and calling them incompetent during real security threats (Source: CfA using X)

Several users viewed the ambush as [retribution](#), arguing that the officers' deaths were [warranted](#) due to the police's record of [brutality](#). Other users said the incident would serve as a [cautionary lesson](#) to law enforcement.

There were 25 posts mentioning this narrative, which collectively garnered 10,628 views and 83 engagements.



Screenshot of an X post [framing](#) the ambush as karma for past police killings, suggesting the officers' deaths were deserved (Source: CfA using X)

Parallel discussions [questioned](#) government spending and priorities. Twenty posts, which received about 8,582 views, [criticised](#) Kenya's deployment of police to Haiti to help combat gang violence while domestic [security](#) threats like Al-Shabaab remained under-addressed.



Screenshot of an X post [questioning](#) why Kenyan police are deployed to Haiti amid ongoing domestic security challenges (Source: CfA using X)

3. Paid gangs, ‘goons’: Political violence and protest disruption

a. Nairobi governor Johnson Sakaja allegedly hired goons to disrupt protests

On 12 June 2025, [protests](#) erupted across Kenya following the death of blogger Ojwang in police custody, with demonstrators demanding justice and accountability. As the movement grew, the #SiriNiNumbers (Swahili, meaning The secret is in the numbers) campaign called for large-scale protests on 25 June 2025, pushing for economic reforms and civic action.

Amid these demonstrations, allegations emerged on social media claiming that Nairobi governor Johnson Sakaja had hired goons to disrupt otherwise peaceful protests. Between 17 and 21 June 2025, discussions linking [Sakaja](#) to the deployment of paid gangs received 1,339 mentions, 335,494 views, and 14,928 engagements on X, while Facebook saw over 1,100 mentions on the topic. In a [graphic post](#), a young man accused of being a goon was beaten and burned alive by ‘boda boda’ (motorcycle) riders after allegedly attacking protesters.

Embakasi East MP Paul Ongili Owino, also known as Babu Owino, shared a [video](#) of an injured man claiming he had been sent by Sakaja and paid Kes 1,000 (\$7.74) to disrupt the protests. Owino described the alleged bribery as politically dangerous and morally reprehensible, and demanded legal and political accountability.



Screenshot of sample posts linking Sakaja to goon mobilisation during the 17 June 2025 protests (CfA using Meltwater)

Users [accused](#) a known ‘political fixer’ of directing Sakaja’s involvement, connecting it to a history of political violence. Others [posted](#) about Sakaja and Calvince Okoth, popularly known as Gaucho, a political commentator and a supporter of the Orange Democratic Movement party, warning of retaliation against suspected goons. Several accounts [named](#) grassroots mobilisers Gaucho and [Swaleh Sonko](#) as the primary organisers of goon activities. These accounts claimed that both figures received payments from Sakaja or his proxies to recruit the goons. The posts referenced financial transactions involving Kes 2 million (\$15,480), with portions of the money said to have gone to the coastal region for further coordination.

On 22 June 2025, Sakaja publicly denied any involvement in the protest disruption. Videos [showing](#) thugs chanting ‘Sakaja Tumelinda Jiji’ (‘Sakaja, we have protected the city’) while patrolling Nairobi or gathered outside his government office, further fuelled claims of his involvement. In a [press](#)

[briefing](#), Sakaja dismissed the allegations as politically motivated falsehoods intended to undermine his leadership. He said he supports peaceful protests and condemned any acts of violence.

b. Allegations of state-backed goons and deadly police violence fuel anger in Nairobi

Allegations that politicians and state actors used hired goons to sabotage nationwide protests in June 2025 became a flashpoint for public outrage, amplifying anger over police brutality and deaths in custody.

Between 11 and 24 June 2025, over 15,480 mentions on X and 1,700 on Facebook focused on ‘police and goons,’ generating 741,000 engagements and 22 million views. With about 57.1% of the mentions expressing negative sentiment, 40.4% expressing neutral sentiment, and 2.5% expressing positive sentiment. Videos [posted](#) on 17 June 2025 showed uniformed police walking alongside armed men attacking protesters in Nairobi. Users accused the government of deploying paid thugs to infiltrate and disrupt the largely youth-led demonstrations demanding justice and reforms.

The online news outlet Pulse Live published an [interview](#) on 21 June 2025 with an alleged goon, who claimed that influential politicians routinely paid groups to break up protests, seize land, and intimidate rivals. On 26 June 2025, blogger Cyprian Nyakundi posted an image of goons beside police officers with the caption, ‘the only group with a monopoly of violence in Kenya is the government’. That [post](#) alone generated 19,600 engagements and 288,000 views. Opposition politician Martha Karua [described](#) the alleged coordination on X as ‘state-sponsored chaos and looting’.

The allegations of goons disrupting protests also came during the nationwide protests that erupted after the death in police custody of blogger Ojwang. A [statement](#) issued by the National Police Service (NPS) on 08 June 2025 on [Facebook](#) and X claimed that Ojwang sustained injuries after hitting his head against a cell wall in Central Police Station in Nairobi. The X post received engagement of 78,400, which accumulated 4.24 million views. On Facebook, the statement had 24 mentions, receiving a total of 265,044 views and 2,903 reactions. A sample of the first 10 comments on the post showed that 100% of respondents did not believe the cause of death. One [reply](#) said: ‘Wacheni kutupima akili (in Swahili, meaning stop testing our intelligence). His hands have defensive wounds. Albert was beaten to death. You MUST pay!’ while [another](#) said: ‘What a lie. You are murderers.’

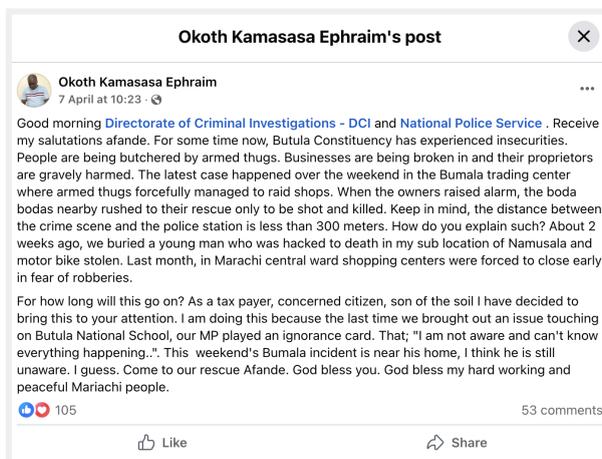
Protests erupted and escalated after the 17 June 2025 killing of Kariuki, a street vendor shot point-blank by police during demonstrations. Graphic video of the shooting went viral, fuelling 78,962 mentions on X, 11,000 mentions on Facebook, and 17.1 million cumulative views. The two officers involved were identified, arraigned on 19 June 2025, and one was later indicted for murder.

4. Rising local security threats: Crime and gang violence

a. Insecurity concerns raised in Butula constituency

On 07 April 2025, a post by a Facebook user, [Okoth Kamasasa Ephraim](#) alleged that armed criminals were attacking residents, injuring business owners, and looting shops. The [post, directed](#) to the [Directorate of Criminal Investigations](#) (DCI) and the [police](#), said that thugs at Busia county’s Bumala trading centre reportedly raided shops and shot motorcycle riders who responded to the incident. It noted that the attack occurred less than 300 metres from the local police station. Other incidents mentioned by the user included the killing of a young man in the Namusala area and criminal activity in Marachi ward, leading businesses to close early. He also said he was disappointed with the area’s MP, [Wamboka Wanami Jack Nelson](#), for dismissing concerns about similar previous incidents.

The Facebook post received 6,400 views and 158 interactions, with many users sharing similar concerns. Several accounts described repeated robberies, livestock theft, and attacks on motorcycle riders. There was a common sentiment that criminal activity had become a routine occurrence, even in areas close to police stations.



Screenshot of Ephraim's [post](#) alleging rising insecurity in Butula constituency and criticising inaction by local leaders and the police, following a series of violent incidents (Source: CfA using Facebook)



Screenshot of comments responding to Ephraim's post, echoing concerns over increased crime levels and police inaction in Butula (Source: CfA using Facebook)

On 15 April 2025, the DCI [announced](#) the arrest of two suspects, Boniface Nyongesa Masakari and Denis Obelo Ekisa, in the Malaba township in connection with a series of violent robberies in Busia town and surrounding neighbourhoods. Their arrest came weeks after residents [raised](#) security [concerns](#). The DCI added that 'authorities recovered a Tokarev pistol loaded with eight rounds of 7.62 x 25mm ammunition from Nyongesa's residence'.

b. Spike in gang violence prompts security response in Nakuru county

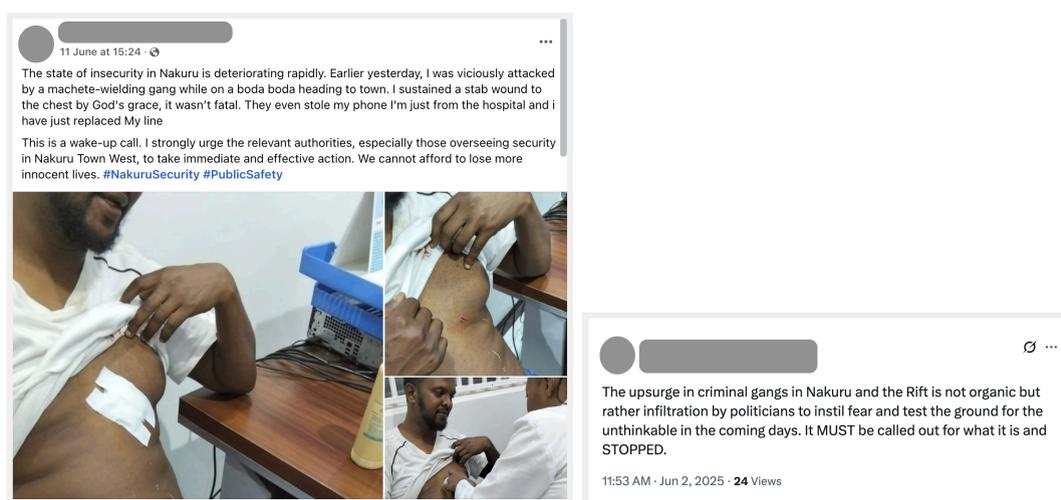
On 02 June 2025, television channel NTV [reported](#) that there had been a shootout between criminal gang members and the police in Nakuru county the previous day, leading to the fatal shooting of constable Josephat Ruto. The report stated that there was a spike in gang-related activity in Nakuru between 19 May and 01 June 2025 and that armed groups were increasingly targeting civilians, particularly at business premises such as M-Pesa (mobile money) shops, where they robbed customers and injured or killed those who resisted.

On 04 June 2025, a Facebook [video](#) circulated showing police exchanging gunfire with gang members in Nakuru's central business district after the gang reportedly began robbing people at their workplaces.

Between 28 May and 10 June 2025, mentions of these gang-related incidents saw 58,920 views and 450 interactions on Facebook. On X, there were 10 posts with 4,670 views and 23 interactions. A sentiment analysis revealed that 80% of the comments were users [expressing](#) frustration over the recurring attacks and [criticising](#) what they saw as inadequate media coverage of gang violence in the county. Some X users [alleged](#) that the gangs are politically linked, claiming certain MPs were backing these groups to intimidate residents. Others [speculated](#) that the surge in gang activity may be part of a broader strategy to sow fear and test the public's reaction ahead of potential political unrest. The remaining 20% of posts reflected neutral sentiment. In [response](#) to the escalating violence, a special police unit from Nairobi was deployed to Nakuru.

On 11 June 2025, Facebook user [@Abdulahi Adan Mohammed](#) [posted](#) about his attack by gang members in Nakuru the previous day. According to a separate Facebook [post](#), the incident occurred early in the morning while Mohammed was en route to Nairobi for a [meeting](#). The post added that he was stabbed in the chest and robbed of his phone and other valuables.

The two posts collectively received 35,700 views and 624 interactions. In the comments, some users voiced concern about the resurgence of gang activity in Nakuru, while others criticised the county government for failing to effectively address rising insecurity.



Screenshots of a [Facebook](#) and [X](#) post mentioning heightened gang activity in Nakuru (Source: CfA using Facebook and X)

c. Rising fear of attacks and robberies by the Panga boys in Mombasa county

On 29 May 2025, [footage](#) on Facebook showed Panga Boys gang members assaulting an individual in Kisauni. The machete-wielding gang operating in Mombasa was dressed in buibuis (in Swahili, referring to a loose, black cloak worn by some Muslim women) to conceal their identities. They were seen searching a male victim, taking his belongings, including a phone and wallet, before brutally beating him with machetes and leaving him on the ground.

On X, one [post](#) claimed that a formal demand had been issued to the cabinet secretary for interior, Kipchumba Murkomen, calling for the removal of local security heads in the coastal region due to their inaction against these gangs. Several users [described](#) the machete gangs as state-sponsored goons that the police were either [unable](#) or unwilling to combat effectively. Others [warned](#) young people against joining the Panga Boys gang, describing it as a fast path to prison or death, and [urged](#) the government to respond decisively to [combat](#) the menace.

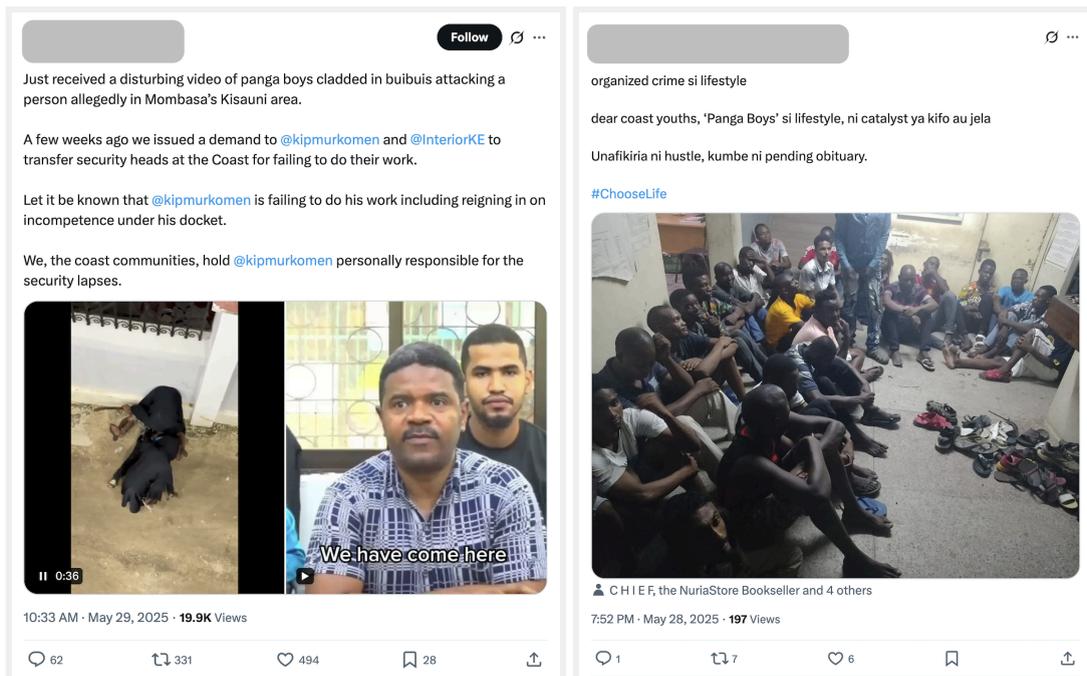
Between 29 May and 10 June 2025, mentions of machete gangs on X totalled 815, generating 58,413 views and 2,340 interactions. On Facebook, such posts received 223,360 views and 2,700 interactions.

Earlier, on 11 April 2025, blogger Nyakundi had shared an X [post](#) detailing an alleged attempted robbery by the Panga Boys gang in Mtwapa, Kilifi county. The post included security footage showing young men armed with machetes arriving on motorcycles and attempting to rob a compound. Comments [on the post](#) showed the growing alarm of residents in the coastal counties of Kilifi, Kwale, and Mombasa. Nyakundi's [post](#) had 237,200 views and 1,717 interactions.

Between 02 and 15 April 2025, the Panga Boys gang was the focus of 2,344 mentions on X, generating 13,700 engagements and 1.2 million views. Many posts [criticised](#) the NPS for failing to act decisively, accusing it of issuing only vague assurances. The criticism came amid a [six-day tour](#) by Murkomen across six coastal counties from 07 to 12 April 2025. The tour, dubbed '[Jukwaa la Usalama \[security forum\] county tours initiative](#)', aimed to 'assess the security situation across the counties while engaging local leaders and others. On 08 April 2025, Murkomen ordered the arrest of [politicians](#) suspected of sponsoring gangs.

On Facebook, over 150 posts discussed the gang during the same period. A separate March 2025 post in the [MOMBASA POLITICS](#) group described a Likoni attack on a doctor. The post did not offer further details on the doctor's condition.

Since then, police [arrested](#) 170 suspects in a sweeping operation. However, public reaction was divided. A Facebook video of the arrests garnered 8,900 views and 290 reactions, with many users labelling the move as [performative](#). Critics alleged suspects were quickly released after paying bribes of Kes 500 (US\$4), and some warned that innocent youth were being detained. An X post [suggested](#) authorities only acted swiftly because tourists were among recent victims, ignoring prior complaints from local residents. The post received four engagements and 79 views.



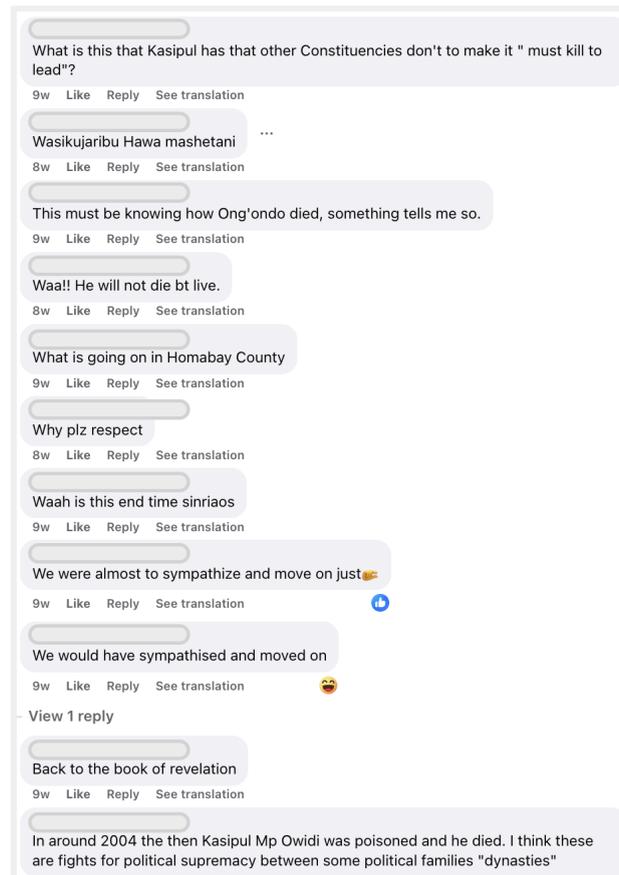
Screenshots of X posts blaming Murkomen for failing to stop Panga Boys attacks (left) and warning youth that joining gangs leads to jail or death (right) (Source: CFA using X)

d. Heightened security concerns in Homa Bay after MP's assassination

The Homa Bay region, long a stronghold of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) under Raila Odinga, has been rocked by [three](#) violent attacks on political leaders since 26 April 2025. While police have not confirmed any clear motive, local politicians, including Deputy Governor Joseph Oyugi Magwanga, have alleged that rival factions within ODM are hiring goons to carry out targeted assassinations and intimidate dissenting voices. Screenshots of [messages](#) circulating on WhatsApp appear to suggest premeditated coordination and even funding for these attacks, fueling claims that the [violence](#) is not random but part of a deliberate effort to shape the region's political landscape ahead of the 2027 elections.

On 11 May 2025, Homa Bay deputy governor [Joseph Oyugi Magwanga](#) escaped a suspected assassination attempt after his official vehicle was [ambushed](#) near his residence in Kabuor village, Kasipul constituency. Magwanga was not in the vehicle at the time of the attack, having reportedly switched cars after receiving information that he was being followed. His security team engaged the attackers in a brief gunfire exchange. No injuries were reported. During a press briefing on 12 May 2025, Magwanga [said](#) he had received death threats before the attack. Homa Bay governor Gladys Wanga [condemned](#) the attack, expressing concern over the growing insecurity, and called for accountability. News about Magwanga's attack generated 1,550 mentions, 572,000 views, and 9,230 interactions on X, whereas on [Facebook](#), the conversation reached 3.4 million views and 34,500 interactions. There were 27 [TikTok](#) videos on the incident, which collectively received 150,600 views and 6,300 interactions. Sentiments surrounding the incident were largely negative, with some users questioning how Kasipul had [become](#) a battleground where politicians competed for positions by any means necessary, including hiring goons. Others [wondered](#) whether politics in Homa Bay has become a 'do or die' affair.

The attack followed the [assassination](#) of Kasipul MP Charles Ong'ondo Were on 30 April 2025. An X [user](#), who claimed to be part of a WhatsApp group that shares [graphic images](#) of victims of machete attacks, [alleged](#) that Were had orchestrated many of the incidents featured in the group and expressed no sympathy over his death. In an [interview](#) with [The People's Bench](#) YouTube channel, [Odoyo Owidi](#), a member of the ruling United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party and a former Kasipul parliamentary aspirant, alleged that Were led a private assassination team before his death. He [cited](#) past incidents of assaults and killings that Were allegedly sanctioned and added that he had no remorse for the MP's death. Owidi further [highlighted](#) a climate of fear in Kasipul, stating that residents were too afraid to report violence orchestrated by the late MP due to safety concerns.



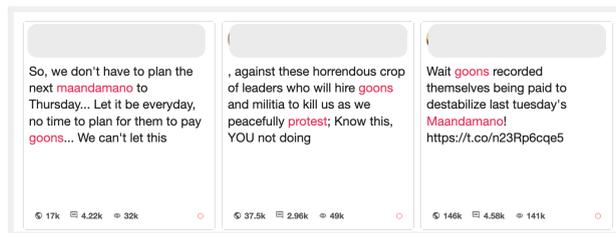
Sample comments following Magwanga's attack ([top](#), [bottom](#))(Source: CfA using Facebook and X)

3. Common tactics across counties

a. Use of crude weapons by goons to intimidate protesters and loot businesses

The peaceful demonstration calling for justice for Ojwang descended into chaos after gangs wielding clubs and whips infiltrated the march, chanting anti-protest slogans and assaulting participants. The demonstrators demanded an end to police brutality and called for the resignation of deputy inspector general of police, Eliud Lagat, whom they claimed was responsible for Ojwang's death. One post on X [said](#) the gang entered the protest zone shouting 'Hakuna maandamano' (Swahili for no protests). Another post recalled police officers standing by passively as peaceful protesters were beaten. A different post claimed that this was a deliberate attempt by the government to instil fear in citizens ahead of the 25 June 2025 protests planned to commemorate the anniversary of the deadly 2024 anti-tax demonstration that killed [61 people](#).

Between 17 and 24 June 2025, there were 34,315 mentions of goons in relation to the demonstration on X, accumulating 4.28 million views and 176,000 interactions. On Facebook, the conversations garnered 45 million views and 104,735 interactions.

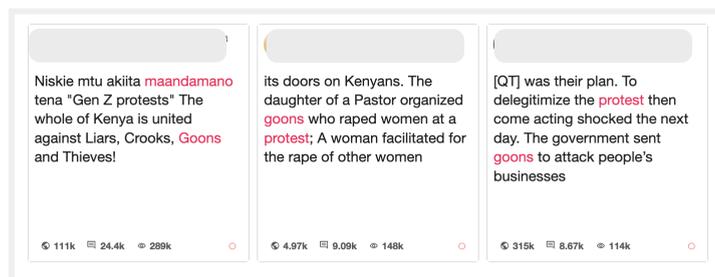


Screenshots of sample posts on goons disrupting protests (Source: CFA using Meltwater)

The 25 June 2025 nationwide protests saw [16 additional deaths](#) as goons infiltrated marches, with several businesses in the Nairobi central business district [targeted](#).

On X, users described these perpetrators as government-paid goons whose objective was to disrupt peaceful protests and shift public blame toward the demonstrators, deliberately [discrediting](#) the Gen Z-led protests. One user [said](#) the goons appeared after the protests had ended and that governor Sakaja funded them. Other users [questioned](#) how the gangs came to possess guns and tear gas canisters, and why police officers on-site did nothing to protect civilians or intervene, further fuelling suspicions of state complicity.

Between 25 June and 04 July 2025, the conversation garnered 38,900 mentions, 4.56 million views, and an engagement of 172,000 on X, whereas on Facebook, there were 30.7 million views and 154,800 interactions.



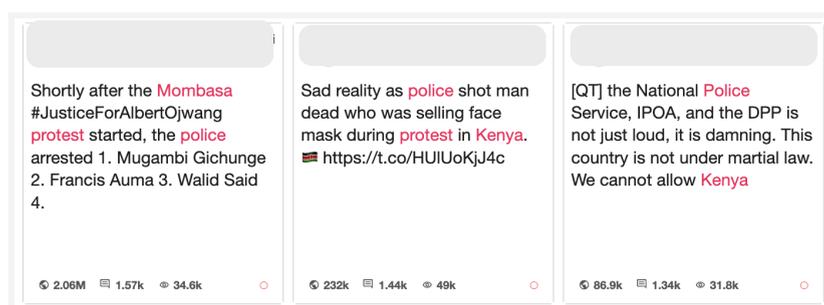
Screenshots of sample posts discussing the deployment of alleged goons to disrupt anti-government protests (Source: CFA using Meltwater)

Cite this case study as 'Mapping extremism and gang violence: A county-level scan of Kenya's security landscape', Code for Africa (CfA), 17 July 2025, www.disinfo.africa

b. Police use of excessive force in Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru, escalating tensions

During the 17 June 2025 demonstrations over Ojwang's death, police [shot](#) at point-blank range, Kariuki, a street vendor selling face masks. In Mombasa, four civilians, Mugambi Gichunge, Francis Auma, Walid Said, and Batuli Swaleh, were reportedly [arrested](#) while picketing peacefully in support of Ojwang. A post on X described the four as unarmed and nonviolent at the time of their arrest. Following all these incidents, an X user [remarked](#) that demonstrations only turn chaotic after police intervention. Another X user [highlighted](#) the use of vehicles with concealed licence plates, while another [criticised](#) the police for standing by as unidentified individuals on motorcycles, shouting 'hakuna maandamano' (no protests), infiltrated protest scenes.

Between 17 and 24 June 2025, there were 10,900 mentions on X of police brutality during protests, recording about 2.25 million views and 67,900 interactions. On Facebook, 6.17 million views and 73,000 reactions were observed.



Screenshots of sample posts on police brutality (Source: CFA using Meltwater)

4. Conclusion

Insurgency, political violence, and organised crime converge to threaten Kenya's security and stability. From Al-Shabaab's deadly ambush in Lamu to the deployment of paid goons to disrupt protests in Nairobi and rising gang violence in counties like Busia, Mombasa, and Nakuru, these incidents show how political manipulation, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and weak law enforcement deepen public mistrust and enable extremist narratives.

Addressing these challenges will require more than security crackdowns. Kenya's government must enforce laws targeting political sponsors of violence, expand youth employment to reduce recruitment into gangs or extremist networks, and rebuild public trust through transparent investigations into police misconduct. Social media companies also have a role to play by strengthening content moderation, combating disinformation, and supporting local fact-checkers to curb the spread of narratives that justify or glorify violence.

A comprehensive approach that combines policy enforcement, economic opportunities, and improved community security is essential to break the cycle of violence and build resilience against future threats.

*This report was written by Cfa iLAB investigative data analysts **Nirali Patel, Dorcas Solonka, Moffin Njoroge, Agape Karashi, and Ivy Masese**. The report was edited by **Gloria Aradi** and reviewed by iLAB investigations manager **Jacktone Momanyi** and iLAB systems manager*

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Mitchelle Awuor. The research was overseen by CFA iLAB editor Athandiwe Saba and commissioned by CFA editor-in-chief Justin Arenstein.

Do you know of incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us, securely, on ilab@codeforafrica.org.



*This report contributes to a growing knowledge base that documents African-focused information manipulation, influence operations, and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO)**. The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member Code for Africa (CfA), including*

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