

**STATEMENT BY ICJ KENYA ON THE PROLIFERATION OF ORGANISED CRIMINAL GANGS,  
THE ATTACK ON ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL, AND THREATS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION,  
ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION**

**16 June 2026**

The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) strongly condemns the violent disruption of a public civic forum convened at All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi, by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Transparency International–Kenya (TI-Kenya) and the Institute for Social Accountability (TISA). The forum had been convened to facilitate public dialogue on the 2026–2027 National Budget presented before the National Assembly on 11 June 2026. The attack was not merely an assault on those present; it constituted a direct attack on the constitutional rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, public participation, and civic engagement guaranteed under the Constitution of Kenya and protected under regional and international human rights law.

This incident is emblematic of a deeply troubling trend: the increasing proliferation and apparent normalisation of organised criminal gangs operating with impunity in civic and political spaces. Over the past several years, Kenya has witnessed a recurring pattern in which groups of violent actors have disrupted peaceful assemblies, intimidated human rights defenders and civil society actors, attacked protesters, destroyed property, and created an atmosphere of fear designed to discourage legitimate public participation. Such actions undermine democratic governance, weaken public trust in institutions, and threaten the ability of citizens to exercise their rights freely and without fear of violence or reprisal. The continued existence and operation of these groups raise urgent concerns regarding the State's ability and willingness to fulfil its constitutional and international obligations to protect individuals from violence and to safeguard civic space.

The repeated explanation by the Ministry of Interior that these criminal elements are merely “goons sponsored by political actors” is no longer sufficient. The Constitution establishes several national security organs, including the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and the National Police Service (NPS), that are funded by taxpayers and equipped to identify, investigate and cause the prosecution of these formations. The continued and unhindered operation of these “goons”, often in full public view, raises serious questions that can no longer be ignored.

Kenyans deserve clear answers to the following questions: -

- Who are these individuals acting as “goons for hire”?
- Who finances and mobilises them?
- Why have the organisers and coordinators of these criminal networks not been identified and prosecuted despite repeated incidents over several years?

Under Article 29 of the Constitution of Kenya, every person has the right to freedom and security of the person, including the right to be free from violence from either public or private sources. The State

bears a direct, absolute, and non-delegable constitutional duty to protect life, maintain public order, and secure all persons within the Republic. The persistent failure to dismantle these criminal formations, investigate their financiers, or prosecute their organisers points to either a dangerous incapacity or a troubling level of institutional tolerance and complicity by our national security organs.

As Kenya steadily approaches the 2027 General Elections, the country cannot afford the continued normalisation of organised violence, political intimidation, extrajudicial conduct, and impunity. History has repeatedly demonstrated that when criminal gangs are tolerated, weaponised, or politically protected during periods of public contestation, the consequences are devastating for democracy, constitutional order, and national cohesion.

ICJ Kenya, therefore, calls for urgent, transparent, and decisive action from all constitutionally mandated institutions. We specifically call upon:

- The Inspector General of the National Police Service and the Director of Criminal Investigations (DCI) – to urgently investigate, identify, arrest, and prosecute all coordinators, financiers, mobilisers, and perpetrators linked to organised criminal gangs deployed to disrupt public protests and political gatherings.
- The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) – to immediately commence independent investigations into the conduct, actions, and omissions of law enforcement officers during recent demonstrations, including all incidents involving deaths, injuries, disappearances, excessive use of force, and alleged collusion with criminal gangs.
- The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) – to ensure that all persons found criminally responsible, including public officials who aid, facilitate, or shield violent actors, are prosecuted without fear, favour, or political interference.
- The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) and other independent oversight bodies – to intensify monitoring, documentation, and public reporting on protest-related violations and the growing threat posed by organised political violence ahead of the 2027 elections.
- Political leaders across the divide – to immediately cease the financing, mobilisation, and protection of violent criminal formations for political ends, and to publicly commit to peaceful, constitutional, and democratic engagement.
- The Cabinet Secretary responsible for Internal Security – to re-energise the police reforms process anchored by the Maraga Taskforce on Police Reforms, in order to restore public confidence in the National Police Service. Police in Kenya must be accountable to the people and to the Constitution.

The Government cannot continue to claim legitimacy while failing to protect its citizens from violence it is constitutionally obligated to prevent and confront. Kenya's democracy cannot survive where violence becomes a tolerated instrument of governance or political competition.

ICJ Kenya calls upon all State organs to act decisively to protect the country from sliding further into anarchy and a culture of fear, impunity, and institutional breakdown.

Signed,



Christine Alai  
Chairperson, ICJ Kenya.