



FIDA-KENYA

BOARD COURTESY CALL ON THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF KISUMU COUNTY 23 JULY 2026

MEMORANDUM

On behalf of the FIDA-Kenya Governing Board, Membership, and Secretariat, we convey our warm greetings and appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you.

The Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) submits this Memorandum to express grave concern over the escalating insecurity within the County and its disproportionate impact on the safety, dignity, rights and livelihoods of women and girls.

FIDA-Kenya is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan women's rights organization established in 1985 with the mandate to promote, protect and advance the rights of women and girls through legal aid, strategic litigation, legal and policy advocacy, public legal education, research and strategic partnerships. For over four decades, FIDA-Kenya has championed access to justice, elimination of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), women's leadership, and the realization of the constitutional rights of women and girls throughout Kenya.

Your office, as the lead coordinator of security within the County, bears a critical responsibility to ensure that security interventions adequately respond to the unique protection needs of women and girls.

FIDA-Kenya and the Office of the County Commissioner therefore share a common constitutional obligation to uphold the rule of law and safeguard the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Kenya, including the rights to life, dignity, equality, freedom and security of the person. Addressing the current security challenges requires gender-responsive interventions that recognize women and girls as among those most affected by insecurity.

FIDA-Kenya commends the County Security Team, under your joint leadership and the Governor of Kisumu County, for convening the recent county security meeting and unveiling a six-point resolution aimed at addressing the growing insecurity across the County. The commitment demonstrated through these resolutions is a positive step towards restoring public confidence and strengthening security coordination.

Notwithstanding these efforts, FIDA-Kenya remains concerned that women and girls continue to experience heightened levels of insecurity, particularly in relation to sexual and gender-based violence, criminal gang attacks, harassment and suspected femicide. It is against this backdrop that FIDA-Kenya respectfully presents the following observations and recommendations to support ongoing multi-agency efforts to enhance public safety and strengthen the protection of women and girls in Kisumu County.

Current Security Situation in Kisumu County

FIDA-Kenya has observed with concern a steady rise in reports of violent crime across various parts of Kisumu County. Resultantly, women and girls are increasingly exposed to risks of sexual violence, harassment, assault and exploitation while commuting to work or school, engaging in business, accessing markets, seeking healthcare, collecting water and firewood, or simply moving within their communities. The pervasive fear of violence has significantly restricted their mobility, economic participation and enjoyment of public spaces.

Residents continue to report robberies, gang-related violence, killings and sexual offences, compounded by inadequate police patrols, delayed emergency response, poor street lighting, and insecurity within informal settlements and peri-urban areas. These conditions disproportionately affect women and girls, many of whom depend on public transport, informal employment and evening trading activities for their livelihoods. The resulting insecurity not only threatens their physical safety but also undermines their access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities and other fundamental rights.

Additionally, recent political gatherings have witnessed violent incidents that have endangered members of the public and exposed women and girls to heightened risks of physical assault, sexual violence, displacement and loss of livelihoods. On 31 May 2026, violence reportedly erupted during a political rally held at Kirembe Grounds, where armed groups engaged in intimidation, robbery and destruction of property despite the presence of security personnel. Similarly, on 12 July 2026, violence associated with the Linda Mwananchi rally near St. Stephen's ACK Cathedral resulted in loss of life, destruction of property, including several motorcycles and a police vehicle, and widespread panic. Such incidents disproportionately affect women traders, female commuters and young girls, who often become victims of violence and intimidation during periods of unrest.

The proliferation of organized criminal gangs within informal settlements, including Manyatta, Obunga, Nyalenda, Kondele and surrounding neighbourhoods, has become a significant security concern. Residents have identified several locations, including the Yellow Bridge–Nyamasaria corridor, as crime hotspots characterized by inadequate lighting and insufficient police patrols. Criminal gangs continue to engage in robbery with violence, extortion, assault and intimidation, with women and girls frequently targeted because they are perceived as easier victims.

In Ahero Town, criminal groups commonly referred to as "Chude Chude" have reportedly been linked to violent attacks and robberies, while in Nyalenda, gangs operating within Kilo and Nyaori continue to target pedestrians, commuters and mobile money operators. The resulting insecurity has curtailed women's economic activities, reduced business operating hours, discouraged girls from attending evening classes and heightened fear among women operating small enterprises within affected communities. This has been further aggravated by reports of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, intimate partner violence and suspected femicide, which continue to undermine the constitutional rights of women and girls to life, dignity, equality and security of the person.

Incident Reporting of particular interest

FIDA-Kenya is particularly concerned by a number of recent incidents that have heightened public anxiety regarding the safety and security of women and girls across Kisumu County, including:

- **Kona Legion:** The reported rape and murder of a woman in the Kona Legion area has deeply disturbed residents and underscored the urgent need for prompt investigations, accountability and strengthened preventive security measures to protect women and girls.
- **Manyatta:** In June 2026, the body of an unidentified woman was reportedly discovered in the Skyway area of Manyatta "B" Ward following an alleged sexual assault. The incident generated widespread fear among residents and reinforced concerns regarding the safety of women and girls in public spaces.
- **Obunga:** Earlier this year, a forty-year-old woman was found dead in a guest room within a local entertainment establishment under circumstances that remain under investigation. The incident has heightened anxiety among women working in the informal economy, particularly those whose livelihoods require them to operate during evening hours.
- **Kisumu West:** Residents of Lower Kotetni, Ngege Beach and Maseno continue to report attacks targeting women travelling to and from markets. Poor street lighting, bushy areas and suspected criminal hideouts continue to expose women and girls to heightened risks of assault, robbery and sexual violence.

Beyond these reported incidents, cases of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence continue to be reported across the County, involving intimate partners, criminal gangs and, in some instances, persons occupying positions of trust and authority. Equally alarming are reports of suspected femicide, including the reported rape and murder of a college student whose body was recovered in Riat Forest. These incidents are not isolated criminal acts but reflect broader protection gaps that demand urgent, coordinated and gender-responsive interventions.

The continued occurrence of these violations calls for strengthened prevention measures, prompt investigations, survivor-centred responses and effective prosecution of perpetrators. Protecting women and girls from violence is not only a public security imperative but also a constitutional and human rights obligation requiring sustained collaboration between government agencies, law enforcement, civil society and local communities.

Proposed Areas of Collaboration

Recognizing the complementary mandates of the Office of the County Commissioner and FIDA-Kenya, we propose enhanced collaboration in the following areas:

- Strengthening gender-responsive community policing and early warning mechanisms through active engagement with Nyumba Kumi structures, community leaders, women's organizations, youth groups and civil society.
- Convening regular county security forums specifically addressing violence against women and girls and other emerging protection concerns.
- Developing and implementing coordinated county strategies for the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, femicide and trafficking.
- Supporting sustained public legal awareness on women's rights, crime prevention, available protection mechanisms and reporting procedures.
- Strengthening survivor-centred referral pathways through enhanced coordination between police, health facilities, legal aid providers, shelters and psychosocial service providers.
- Promoting data collection, analysis and information sharing on trends relating to violence against women and girls to inform evidence-based interventions.

Recommendations

FIDA-Kenya recommends that the Office of the County Commissioner, in collaboration with the National Police Service, the County Government of Kisumu and other stakeholders:

1. Intensify visible police patrols in identified crime hotspots, particularly during evenings and night hours when women and girls face heightened security risks.
2. Increase deployment of security personnel around markets, schools, transport corridors, informal settlements and other public spaces frequently accessed by women and girls.
3. Strengthen intelligence-led policing and dismantle criminal gangs responsible for attacks against women and girls.
4. Collaborate with the County Government to improve street lighting, clear overgrown vegetation and eliminate unsafe public spaces.
5. Prioritize prompt investigation, arrest and prosecution of perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence, femicide and related offences.
6. Establish confidential, survivor-centred reporting mechanisms and strengthen witness protection to encourage reporting of violence.

7. Institutionalize regular multi-sector county security dialogue forums involving government agencies, women's rights organizations, youth representatives, religious leaders and community leadership.
8. Strengthen referral systems by ensuring survivors have timely access to medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, safe shelters and protection services.
9. Enhance public awareness campaigns on prevention of violence against women and girls, positive masculinities and community responsibility in protecting vulnerable persons.
10. Develop targeted youth empowerment, employment and drug prevention programmes aimed at addressing the root causes of criminal gang recruitment and violence.

Conclusion

FIDA-Kenya acknowledges and appreciates the efforts undertaken by your office, the National Police Service and other security agencies in maintaining peace and security within Kisumu County.

Nevertheless, the prevailing security situation demonstrates that women and girls continue to face disproportionate risks of violence, sexual exploitation and insecurity that require urgent, coordinated and sustained action. A gender-responsive security approach that prioritizes prevention, accountability, survivor protection and community participation is essential to safeguarding their constitutional rights and restoring public confidence.

We sincerely thank you for granting us this opportunity to engage and share our perspectives. FIDA-Kenya remains committed to partnering with you and all relevant stakeholders through legal aid, legal awareness, policy advocacy, survivor support, community engagement and strategic partnerships to promote a safer, more secure and gender-responsive Kisumu County where every woman and girl can live free from violence and fear.

Thank you.