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Organised Gang Crime in Ahero and Nyando Sub-County, Kenya, 2025–2026: A Documentary Analysis of Gang Violence, Illicit Drug Networks and Vigilante Retaliation

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Abstract

Ahero is a busy market and transport town in Nyando Sub-County, Kisumu County, Kenya, where the Kisumu–Nairobi and Kisumu–Kisii roads meet. Reports from 2025 and 2026 describe organised criminal groups operating there, yet no study has pulled that evidence together. This paper presents a documentary analysis of 32 publicly available reports: 15 on Ahero and wider Nyando, 12 on organised gang activity elsewhere in Kisumu County, and five giving national or background context. Ten event groups in Nyando were coded for signs of organisation, such as named groups, repeated activity, material motive and supply links, and compared with seven incident groups and one county-wide crackdown in Kisumu. The strongest evidence concerns the 'Chude Chude' gang, accused of muggings and attacks around the Ahero interchange, and the retaliation in early April 2026, when boda boda riders hunted suspected members and officials cited at least seven deaths. Five of the ten event groups involved cannabis distribution, including one network described as supplying Kisumu and Nairobi. State responses were mostly arrests, patrols and crackdowns after harm had occurred, and the one infrastructural measure was a floodlight at the interchange. Officials and residents hinted at financiers and political links, but none was established. Organised crime in Ahero appears to combine predatory street gangs, drug distribution and counter-organisation by riders, sustained by weak trust in policing. Police occurrence data are needed to test these patterns before the 2027 election.

1 Introduction

In the early hours of a Friday in April 2026, a boda boda rider in Ahero was attacked and seriously injured. His colleagues, who already had names in mind, regrouped and went looking for the men they blamed. Within days the Nyando Deputy County Commissioner was telling reporters that five suspected gang members had been killed by mobs, that a rider had died as well, and that detectives were now hunting the killers [1]. The County Commissioner later put the toll in Nyando at seven [2].

It is tempting to read an episode like this as a sudden collapse of order. This paper asks a narrower question. How organised is the crime reported in Ahero, and what does it look like beside the organised gang activity reported elsewhere in Kisumu County?

The national backdrop is not reassuring. A 2025 survey by the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) found at least 309 active gangs across eleven counties, with Kisumu accounting for between 20 and 22 depending on the report [3, 4]. By September 2026, Human Rights Watch was documenting attacks by organised gangs on opposition and civil society gatherings ahead of the August 2027 election [5]. In Kisumu city, the county security committee said in July 2026 that it would confront organised criminal activity and dismantle criminal networks [6].

Ahero sits where the Nairobi–Kisumu and Kisii–Kisumu highways meet, and a county planning profile ranks it second only to Kisumu city for trade and revenue [7]. A town like that gathers cash, travellers and goods in one place, which is exactly what street gangs and traffickers look for. Yet most reporting on gangs in the county concentrates on Kisumu city, and scholarship on organised violence in Kenya has

focused on national movements and large cities [8–10]. To our knowledge, no study has assembled the evidence on organised crime in Ahero and the wider Nyando Sub-County.

We try to do that for 2025 and 2026 using public documents only. We ask four questions. What forms of organised criminal activity are documented in Ahero and Nyando? Which signs of organisation appear in the sources? How have riders, residents and the state responded? And how does Ahero compare with the organised gang activity reported elsewhere in Kisumu County? Because the study relies on published reports, it involves no human participants and avoids the risks of fieldwork in a town where reprisal killings are recent.

A word on what the paper does not claim. It does not say how much crime there is in Ahero, whether crime rose or fell between 2025 and 2026, or that any person named in a report is guilty. It maps what has been reported, how organised it appears, and where the reporting runs out. That is a modest aim, but it is the part of the picture that is missing.

2 Context and conceptual framework

2.1 What counts as organised crime

Organised crime is a slippery term. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime describes an organised criminal group as a structured group of three or more people, existing for a period of time and acting together to commit serious crimes for financial or other material benefit [11]. Kenya's Prevention of Organised Crimes Act of 2010 makes the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions responsible for pursuing those who recruit, train and fund gangs [5]. News reports rarely give enough detail to apply a legal definition strictly. We therefore treat organisation as a matter of degree and look for indicators in each source: a named or recognised group, several people acting together, repeated activity over time, a material motive, links to a supply or distribution network, and alleged protection or funding by influential people.

2.2 Protection and counter-organisation

Two older arguments help in reading local gangs. Gambetta showed that organised criminal groups often sell private protection where trust in the state is thin, and that protection and extortion can be hard to tell apart [12]. Tilly went further and argued that states themselves grew by selling protection against threats they helped create [13]. Both suggest that the question in a town like Ahero is not only who commits crime but whom people believe will protect them. If residents and traders see the police as slow or compromised, other groups, including occupational associations such as boda boda riders, may step into the gap.

2.3 Place, community and politics

Routine activity theory predicts that crime clusters where motivated offenders meet suitable targets without capable guardians [14]. A highway junction at dawn is a textbook case. Work on collective

efficacy found that violence is lower where residents trust one another and are willing to intervene for the common good [15]. Where formal channels are distrusted, that same willingness can harden into vigilantism. Kenyan scholarship adds that vigilantism, youth movements and organised violence have long been tangled up with politics and with weak policing [8–10, 16].

From this we draw four propositions to guide coding. First, organised criminal activity in Ahero will concentrate at the transport node and market, where guardianship is thin. Second, it will not be limited to street gangs but will include distribution networks that use the highway. Third, where trust in policing is low, counter-organisation and mob violence will appear. Fourth, state responses will be mainly reactive, and links to financiers or politicians will be alleged more often than demonstrated. These are sensitising ideas, not hypotheses to be tested statistically.

3 Methods

3.1 Design and scope

We used qualitative documentary analysis, the systematic reading and interpretation of existing documents [17], combined with content analysis for coding text into categories [18] and the logic of event datasets that code violent events by type, place and date [19]. Narrative material was analysed thematically in the six phases described by Braun and Clarke [20]. The study period ran from 1 January 2025 to 28 October 2026, the date of the final search. The core geography was Ahero town and Nyando Sub-County. Kisumu County served as a comparison area, and national reports supplied background.

3.2 Building the corpus

The corpus was built in three tiers. Tier one holds documents about Ahero and Nyando. Tier two holds documents about organised gang activity elsewhere in Kisumu County, which let us ask whether Ahero looks distinctive or typical. Tier three holds national and background reports on gangs and on Ahero itself. Searches were run on public web search engines in late October 2026, using place terms (Ahero, Nyando, Kochogo, Kobura, Rabuor, Awasi, Kisumu) and event terms (gang, Chude Chude, bhang, NACADA, mob, robbery, goons, crackdown, DCI). Sources included the Kenya News Agency, The Star, Citizen Digital, People Daily, The Standard, K24, AllAfrica, Human Rights Watch and several digital outlets, together with police and county statements as relayed by them.

Candidate events were screened against the study period and scope. Reports from before 2025 were excluded. Items that were not crimes of the kind studied, such as a suspected suicide and a house fire, were excluded as well. Items whose date or key details could not be confirmed from a primary article, including a funeral attack, a chang’aa seizure, a counterfeit-alcohol raid, a girl’s death and a 17-sack cannabis seizure, were set aside. Two other killings were left out because nothing in the sources points to group organisation: a fatal stabbing after a youth dispute at a relief food distribution, and a body found in the River Nyando, whose sub-county could not be confirmed.

A document was included if it was published in the study period, reported an identifiable event or official response within the scope, and had its date and key details retrievable from the primary text or a retrievable extract. Several Kenya News Agency pages block automated access, so for those we used extracts and cross-checked the date against content and corroborating reports. Multiple articles about one event were merged into one event group.

We defined an event group as one episode or a tightly connected set of reports about it. The April 2026 clashes, which involved several attacks and deaths, count as one group. A pattern report, such as traders describing repeated muggings with no separate dates, also counts as one group because the source gives nothing finer.

3.3 Coding and analysis

Each event group was coded for date, place, type of activity, and seven indicators of organisation: a named or recognised group, several actors, repeated activity, material motive, network or supply link, alleged protection or financing by influential people, and the state response. An indicator was marked ‘reported’ when the source stated it, ‘alleged’ when a resident or official suggested it without proof, and ‘not reported’ otherwise. Unsubstantiated allegations were never treated as findings. Names of victims and suspects were left out, and terms such as ‘suspected gang member’ follow the source and imply no finding of guilt.

Documentary data carry well-known biases. Newspapers favour dramatic and easily reached events [21], and the choice of sources shapes the picture of violence that emerges [22]. Police-led drug seizures will be reported because police announce them. We therefore read the corpus as a record of what was reported and enforced, not of what happened, and we avoid claims about incidence or trends. Coding was done by a single analyst. The study uses only public documents and involves no human participants.

4 Results

4.1 The corpus

The final corpus has 32 documents. Fifteen concern Ahero and wider Nyando, twelve concern organised gang activity elsewhere in Kisumu County, and five give national or background context. The Nyando documents describe ten event groups (Table 1). Five involve cannabis distribution. Two involve the ‘Chude Chude’ gang, namely the April 2026 clashes and a wider pattern of muggings and break-ins. One is a report of general gang activity and killings, one is a suspected robbery killing, and one is a village mob killing that we keep as a non-gang comparison. The Kisumu County documents describe seven incident groups and one county-wide crackdown (Table 2).

By source type, the Nyando documents lean on official channels. Seven come from the Kenya News Agency or are its copy republished elsewhere, five from national outlets (The Star, Citizen Digital and

K24), and three from smaller digital or community outlets (HUBZ Media, The Online Kenyan and WritAfrica). Four of the ten event groups fall in 2025 and six in 2026. That split is more likely to reflect the April 2026 outcry, and what our searches could retrieve, than a change in crime.

Table 1
Event groups from Ahero and Nyando Sub-County, January 2025 to October 2026. Victims and suspects are not named, and 'suspect' follows the source.

No.	Date	Place	Event group	Organisation indicators in the sources	Refs.
1	Jan 2025	Kakola Location	Cannabis seizure	40.1 kg stored and sold from a private home; one arrest; DCI took the case	[23]
2	24 Aug 2025	Kadege village	Homicide and mob killing (non-gang comparison)	Villagers killed a suspect before police arrived; no group identified	[24]
3	8 Sep 2025	Ahero	Cannabis network raid	12 sacks worth about KSh12 million; four persons of interest; main suspect called a key supplier to Kisumu and Nairobi	[25, 26]
4	Dec 2025 (report)	Ahero	Reported gang activity	Residents describe armed robbery, killings and gang activity; alleged police collusion	[27]
5	Jan 2026	Ahero	Cannabis trafficker arrested	Cannabis above KSh4 million; suspect described as a known repeat offender under surveillance	[28, 29]
6	Jan 2026	Ahero, Kisumu–Kericho highway	Lorry seizure	23 packs; Kenyan driver and Ugandan passenger; lorry tried to evade a roadblock	[30]
7	Jan 2026	Ahero bridge	Vehicle seizure	Five bales; car turned back and fled after police pursuit	[31]
8	Early Apr 2026	Ahero, Kochogo North	Gang violence and mob retaliation	Named gang; riders hunted suspects; five suspected members and one rider reported killed; officials later cited at least seven deaths; financiers sought	[1, 2, 32]
9	Apr 2026	Ahero interchange and market	Mugging and break-in pattern	Gang blamed by traders and riders for muggings, break-ins and violent robberies; dawn attacks on travellers	[33]
10	24 Oct 2026	Ahero interchange	Suspected robbery killing	Teacher killed by suspected robbers; gang link not stated	[34]

4.2 The Chude Chude gang

The most heavily reported organised group in Ahero is ‘Chude Chude’. The Star, quoting the Deputy County Commissioner, called it one of the organised groups linked to repeated acts of terror in Ahero and its surroundings [1]. Residents told The Online Kenyan about routine early-morning assaults, phone snatching and roadside attacks around the Ahero interchange, aimed at pedestrians, passengers and boda boda operators [32]. Traders and riders told the Kenya News Agency that the group, described as young men, was behind muggings, break-ins, violent robberies and killings in Ahero and nearby areas [33]. A December 2025 community report had already described armed robbery, killings and gang activity in the town, with residents blaming youth unemployment and poor coordination between police units [27].

What the sources do not give is structure. None says how many members the group has, how it recruits, or how it makes money beyond the proceeds of street robbery. One source reported a man ‘believed to be’ the leader [1]. The County Commissioner said investigators were trying to trace the financiers of the groups involved [2], and residents were reported to fear that local politicians might be linked to the gang [32]. These are allegations and lines of inquiry. None of the documents shows a funder, a politician or a protection arrangement.

4.3 Retaliation by boda boda riders

The April 2026 sequence is the clearest case of counter-organisation. After a rider was attacked early on a Friday morning, fellow riders who had names in mind regrouped and hunted for the suspects. Three suspected gang members were found at their homes in Kochogo North and killed. Another was cornered and killed near the Ahero Total petrol station. On the Monday, a man believed to be the gang’s leader was beaten by riders and allegedly killed one of them in the process [1]. The Deputy County Commissioner condemned the killings, said the Directorate of Criminal Investigations was identifying those responsible, and reported intensified day and night patrols [1].

The death counts do not match. The first report counted five suspected gang members and one rider killed [1]. The County Commissioner spoke of at least seven people killed in Nyando in clashes between rival groups, with Ahero business owners among the worst affected [2], and The Online Kenyan reported at least seven suspected members killed by mobs [32]. We report the range and do not combine the figures. What is clear is that the riders acted as a coordinated group: they shared names, moved house to house over a day-long manhunt, and answered an attack on one of their own. Their association’s chairman told reporters that insecurity had ‘resurfaced’ after a rider was killed and another seriously injured [33].

4.4 Predation at the interchange and market

The reported geography of predatory crime is tight. Residents said travellers getting off at the Ahero junction at dawn were attacked and robbed, and blamed poor lighting. Traders reported repeated break-ins at Ahero Market and said that evening trade had fallen because customers and owners feared

attacks [33]. The community report from December 2025 placed robberies around the Ahero Postal Office and described a young man found beheaded behind a local girls' school, an account we cannot verify [27].

The most recent event fits the same pattern. A primary school teacher was fatally attacked by suspected robbers at the Ahero interchange area in Kochogo North on a Saturday night in October 2026 [34]. The retrievable text does not link the attack to any gang, so we code it as predatory crime with an unknown perpetrator.

4.5 Drug distribution networks

Five of the ten event groups concern cannabis, and they show a different face of organised crime from the street gang. In January 2025, security officers recovered 40.1 kg of cannabis said to be stored and sold from a private home in Kakola Location and arrested a woman, with detectives taking over the case [23]. In September 2025, a NACADA-led sting in Ahero recovered 12 sacks worth about KSh12 million hidden in a house; four persons of interest were arrested [25], and the main suspect was described as a key supplier to the Kisumu and Nairobi markets [26].

In January 2026, NACADA arrested a repeat trafficking suspect in pre-dawn raids in Ahero and seized cannabis worth more than KSh4 million. NACADA described the suspect as a known figure who had remained under close surveillance [28, 29]. In the same month, police intercepted a lorry carrying 23 packs of cannabis after it tried to evade a roadblock in Ahero town on the Kisumu–Kericho highway, arresting a Kenyan driver and a Ugandan passenger [30]. Hours later, a car carrying five bales turned around at Ahero bridge and fled towards Kisumu after a police pursuit [31].

These cases share three features. They all involve vehicles or premises on or near the highway. They are described in terms of supply, with phrases such as 'key supplier' and 'repeat trafficker'. And none was reported as violent. They are also the cases where the sources say most about a market, since one network was said to supply two cities.

4.6 The wider Kisumu comparison

Elsewhere in Kisumu County, the 2025 records are mostly robbery and its aftermath. In July 2025, a mob killed two suspected robbers in Carwash estate while police from a nearby post were still pursuing them [35]. Armed robbers targeted mourners at a homestead in Mayatta B, and police on foot patrol arrested three persons of interest [36]. Intelligence-led operations in September and October 2025 produced arrests of robbery-with-violence suspects in Obunga [37] and of a young man found hiding in a water tank with a loaded AK-47 [38].

Table 2
Comparison event groups from elsewhere in Kisumu County, 2025–2026.

No.	Date	Place	Incident group	Refs.
1	28 Jul 2025	Carwash, Kisumu Central	Mob killing of two suspected robbers	[35]
2	Jul 2025	Mayatta B, Kisumu	Armed robbery of mourners; three persons of interest arrested	[36]
3	22 Sep 2025	Obunga, Kisumu	Two robbery-with-violence suspects arrested	[37]
4	28 Oct 2025	Kisumu	Armed robbery; loaded AK-47 recovered; suspect arrested	[38]
5	12 Jul 2026	Milimani, Kisumu city	Clash outside a cathedral; nine motorcycles torched; eight arrests	[5, 6, 39, 40]
6	7 Aug 2026	Kolwa Central, Kisumu East	Five suspected gang members aged 19–24 arrested at a hideout	[41]
7	Aug 2026	Kisumu–Kericho highway	Fifteen suspects intercepted with crude weapons; suspected leader escaped	[42]
8	Jun–Jul 2026	Kisumu County	Crackdown: more than 200 arrests; resolution to remove goons from political activity	[6, 40, 43]

The 2026 records are more explicitly about organised groups, and more political. On 12 July two groups clashed outside St Stephen's ACK Cathedral in Milimani as opposition-allied leaders attended a service, leaving at least one person dead, with the county security committee reporting two, and nine motorcycles torched [6, 39, 40]. Human Rights Watch described the same event as an attack by men armed with machetes and arrows on a church service attended by opposition politicians [5]. The county committee called the violence organised criminal activity and said more than 200 suspects had been arrested in two weeks [6, 40], and a security meeting earlier in July resolved to eradicate goons from political activity [43]. The Standard described a city where a violent attack was never far away and law enforcement looked lethargic [44]. In August, police raided a hideout in Kolwa Central and arrested five suspected gang members aged 19 to 24 [41], and detectives intercepted three vehicles on the Kisumu–Kericho highway, arresting fifteen suspects with crude weapons while the suspected leader escaped [42].

Set beside Kisumu city, Ahero's organised crime looks less politically framed and less documented. The city reports describe named clashes, political settings and large crackdowns. The Ahero reports describe a street gang, traders, riders and highway trafficking, with political links raised only as unproven fears.

4.7 State responses and attributed drivers

Responses in Ahero were mostly reactive. After the April killings the authorities condemned mob justice, promised investigations and intensified patrols [1, 33], and the County Commissioner said security had

been strengthened and the financiers of organised groups were being sought [2]. Drug cases were driven by NACADA and police operations, some following tip-offs [28, 31]. The only infrastructural measure was a contract awarded on 27 October 2026 for a solar high-mast floodlight at the Ahero interchange, intended to improve security [45].

Four drivers recurred. Residents and traders blamed organised youth groups and their backers, weak or allegedly compromised policing, poor lighting at the interchange, and youth unemployment [27, 33]. The December 2025 report included residents' claims that police arrive late and that some officers work with the gang, which we treat as unverified allegations [27]. The NCRC's national findings echo these themes, naming corruption among some security officers, limited youth opportunities and public reluctance to report gangs [4, 46].

Taken together, the responses addressed symptoms in sequence. After an attack came a press briefing and patrols, after a seizure came an arrest, and only at the end of October, months after the killings, did a lighting contract appear. In the documents we retrieved, none describes a standing mechanism, such as a joint committee with the riders' association, a community reporting line or a published plan for the interchange.

4.8 Signs of organisation across the Nyando event groups

Across the ten Nyando event groups, the indicators were unevenly present. A named group appeared in two (events 8 and 9, both about Chude Chude). Several actors were reported in five (events 2, 3, 6, 8 and 9). Repeated activity was reported or alleged in four (events 4, 5, 8 and 9). A material motive was clear in eight, because cannabis sales or robbery were involved. A network or supply link was explicit in only one, the September 2025 raid whose main suspect was described as a supplier to two cities. Alleged protection or financing by influential people appeared in two: the police collusion claim in the December 2025 report, and the financier inquiry and political fears around the April clashes. In short, motive and multiple actors were common, while evidence of durable structure, funding or protection was thin.

5 Discussion

Our first proposition held. Organised criminal activity in Ahero clusters at the interchange, the market and the highway. The floodlight contract shows that officials themselves read the interchange as a guardianship gap, which is what routine activity theory would predict [14, 45]. The reports of dawn attacks on travellers describe offenders who know when and where guardianship is thinnest.

The second proposition also held, and it is the less obvious finding. Reading Ahero only through the Chude Chude story would miss that half of the Nyando event groups concern drug distribution. These records read differently. They describe suppliers, stock houses, repeat offenders and vehicles on the highway, and in one case a link to two city markets. Organised crime in Ahero is therefore both a local predation problem and part of a regional supply chain that happens to pass through the town. We should be cautious here. These cases are in the record because police and NACADA ran operations, so

detection effort shapes what we see. The absence of violence in these reports does not show that the trade is peaceful.

The third proposition, about counter-organisation, is where the case is most striking. The riders' response in April looks like what Gambetta and Tilly would lead us to expect when protection is in doubt [12, 13]. A recognisable occupational group identified targets, acted together and punished them outside the law. Mob killings accounted for at least five reported deaths in the April episode and one in the village of Kadege in 2025 [1, 24]. This also fits the argument that vigilantism in Kenya reflects contested legitimacy of the state more than its absence [8]. It is worth noticing that the Deputy County Commissioner described the gang as terrorising residents before the riders acted [1]. The riders may have seen themselves as filling a gap the police had left. They also created a second wave of killings that the state now has to investigate.

The fourth proposition was also supported. State action was mostly arrests, patrols, condemnations and a lighting contract after the harm. Statements about financiers and political links were raised by the County Commissioner and by residents, yet no source identifies anyone [2, 32]. That caution matters. National reporting treats gang attacks and elite financing as linked, and Human Rights Watch noted that police gave no further information on most arrests connected to gang attacks, while the 2010 Act puts the duty to investigate funders on the police and prosecutors [5]. The test for Ahero is whether investigations into the April killings and into the groups' financiers ever reach a court.

The Kisumu comparison adds two things. First, it shows how the state speaks about organised gangs when it is paying close attention. In the city, the county committee and police use the vocabulary of networks, hideouts, leaders and financiers, and they run large operations, including more than 200 arrests in two weeks and the interception of fifteen suspects with crude weapons [6, 40, 42]. In Ahero the same vocabulary appears only after the April killings, when the County Commissioner spoke of financiers [2]. Second, the same road shows up in both sets of records. Cannabis was seized at Ahero on the Kisumu–Kericho highway [30], and the fifteen suspects were stopped on that highway too [42]. No source links the two, so we note it only as a reason to look at the corridor as a whole.

Put together, the three forms are not separate problems. Street predation, trafficking and retaliation all feed on the same weakness, which is a thin and slow state presence in a place where people and goods move through quickly. A trafficker can use the highway because enforcement comes in bursts. A street gang can work the dawn arrivals because the lighting is poor and the response is late. The riders can claim a punishing role because many residents do not expect the police to deliver. These are different businesses, but all of them lean on the same gap.

Three practical points follow. First, interventions need to engage the riders' association, because retaliation will continue if riders believe an attack on one of them will go unanswered. Second, reporting channels have to be both safe and visibly effective, given the national finding that many people avoid reporting gangs [46]. Third, the 2027 election is close and national reporting links gangs to electoral

violence [5, 47]. Ahero's gang should be monitored with that in mind, even though nothing in the local record shows political backing.

For research, the next step is to test whether the pattern in Ahero appears in other junction towns in the county, because a documentary corpus from one town cannot show whether Ahero is unusual. For practice, the evidence supports simple, visible steps over dramatic ones: better lighting and dawn patrols at the interchange, a standing channel between the riders' association and the sub-county security committee, prompt public updates on the investigations into the April killings, and routine publication of anonymised occurrence data so that residents and researchers can see what the police see.

6 Limitations

The corpus is larger than in an Ahero-only search, but it is still modest, and it was assembled through public web searches rather than a licensed archive. Counts cannot be read as incidence or trends. Detection bias is a real problem: drug cases appear because enforcement operations are announced, while quieter gang activity may never reach print. Several sources are digital or community outlets of uneven reliability, and one fact in the December 2025 report could not be checked. Some Kenya News Agency pages could not be opened in full, so dates and details rest on extracts and consistency with other reports. Death counts for April 2026 differ across sources. We set aside candidate events that we could not confirm, which means some real Nyando events may be missing. Coding was done by one analyst. Finally, no police occurrence book, court file or official statistic was available, so the study maps reporting and cannot measure crime.

7 Conclusion

The documents point to three kinds of organised criminal activity around Ahero in 2025 and 2026: a named street gang that preys on travellers, traders and riders near the interchange; cannabis distribution networks that use the highway; and a retaliatory counter-organisation by boda boda riders that killed several suspected gang members in April 2026. State action was mostly reactive, and links to financiers or politicians were raised but never shown. Compared with Kisumu city, Ahero is less politically framed and less documented, which may itself leave its residents with less pressure on the authorities to act.

The paper's contribution is a verified, coded evidence base and a set of indicators that others can extend. The next steps are plain. Researchers should obtain police occurrence data and court records, add a second coder and a licensed news archive, and follow the April killings and financier inquiries through the courts. With the 2027 election approaching, that evidence will be most useful if it is gathered well before it is needed.

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