REPUBLIC OF KENYA

IPOA Independent Policing Oversight Authority

THE

INDEPENDENT POLICING OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY

REPORT ON MONITORING OF SECURITY PROVISION AND POLICE CONDUCT DURING 26TH FEBRUARY 2026 BY-ELECTIONS

2026



GUARDING PUBLIC INTEREST IN POLICING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) following the monitoring of security provision and police conduct during the by-elections held on 26th February 2026 in Isiolo South Constituency and selected wards in Embu and Kakamega Counties.

The monitoring exercise aimed to assess police preparedness, professionalism, adherence to human rights standards, and overall conduct during the electoral process. The Authority deployed teams across 26 polling centres.

Key findings indicate that the National Police Service (NPS) demonstrated a high level of preparedness, professionalism, and operational effectiveness. The elections were largely peaceful, with no major incidents of violence, excessive force, or serious human rights violations recorded.

However, several challenges were noted, including lack of officer identification, inadequate training, long working hours, logistical constraints, insufficient crowd control equipment, and gender imbalance in deployment.

The report recommends strengthening officer identification, improving welfare and facilitation, enhancing training, increasing deployment of female officers, and investing in non-lethal crowd control equipment.

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1 Introduction

The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) was established under Act No. 35 of 2011 to provide civilian oversight over the work of the Police. Its mandate includes holding the Police accountable, ensuring transparency, and promoting professionalism.

Under Section 6(c) of the IPOA Act, the Authority is mandated to monitor policing operations affecting the public. In this regard, IPOA monitored police conduct during the by-elections held on 26th February 2026.

1.1 Background

Isiolo-South Constituency MP seat fell vacant after the passing away of MP Tubi Bidu Mohammed while receiving treatment at the Nairobi Hospital on 12th Nov. 2025. While Muminji, Evurore and Kabras-West Wards fell vacant after Newton Kariuki, Duncan Mbui and David Athman Ndakwa resigned to contest for the Mbeere North and Malava Parliamentary by-election held ion 27th Nov. 2025 respectively.

The IEBC through a gazette notice no. 18595 and No. 189596 scheduled By-Elections to be held on 26th February 2026 for Member of National Assembly for Isiolo- South Constituency, Member of County Assembly for Muminji Ward, Evurore Ward, Mbeere North Constituency, Embu County and West Kabras Ward, Malava Constituency, Kakamega County.

On 22nd - 23rd January 2026, the IEBC went ahead and scheduled registration of Nominated candidates to vie for the vacant positions. Three Political parties; UDA, Jubilee and NEDP fronted each a candidate for the Isiolo- South, 9 candidates contested for the Muminji, Evurore Wards and 6 candidates contested for the Kabras- West Ward seat.

1.2 Objectives of the Monitoring

The specific objectives were;

1. Observing Police preparedness on electoral security and Police conduct during the elections, in respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms standards.
2. Make actionable recommendations.

1.3 Scope

Isiolo- South Constituency consists of 3 Electoral Wards, **22,181** registered votes and **61** polling stations as tabulated;

Wards	No. Of Registered Voter	Polling Stations
Kinna	8,885	23
Garbatulla	7,238	20
Sericho	6,058	18
TOTALS	**22,181**	**61**

Table 1: Electoral data for Isiolo South

Due to the vastness of the constituency, the monitoring concentrated only on two Wards (Kinna and Garbatulla). Kinna was an area of focus due to its highest number of registered voters, polling stations and the two aspirants cast their votes within the ward hence drawing public interest and following. Garbatulla Ward was also sampled since it was centrally located

and housed the constituency tallying Centre. Tabulated are the monitored **15** polling centres outlining respective ward;

Polling Centre	Ward
Kinna Social Hall	Kinna
BIBI Water Supply 1	Kinna
BIBI Water Supply 2	Kinna
Algani Girls Primary School	Kinna
Duse Primary School	Kinna
Kula Mawe Primary School	Kinna
Kula Mawe Secondary Day School	Kinna
Rapsu Primary School	Kinna
Korbesa- Mobile	Kinna
Boji Primary School	Kinna
Nagaa Primary School	Garbatulla
Garbatulla Day Primary School	Garbatulla
Bisanadhi Primary School	Garbatulla
Daawa Primary School	Garbatulla
Sayyidah Fatamah Girls Educational Complex	Garbatulla

Table 2: Centres monitored in Isiolo South

Monitored Polling Centres in Muminji, Evurore and West Kabras wards were;

County	Constituency	Ward	IEBC Centre
Embu	Mbeere- North	Muminji	1. Karimari Primary School 2. Ndutori Primary School 3. Gatakari Primary School 4. Gangara Primary School 5. Karambari Primary School
Embu	Mbeere- North	Evurore	6. Kanyuambora Primary School 7. Gwakaithi Primary School 8. Kianjere Primary School 9. Ciangara Primary School 10. St.Kizito Kathangari Primary School
Kakamega	Malava	Kabras-West	11. Imbiakhalo Primary School

Table 3: Centres monitored for Ward by-election in Embu and Kakamega

1.4 Methodology

The monitoring teams used observations, photography and interviews to collect information contained in this report. Interviews were conducted with the respective County, Sub County, Senior Police Commanders, and officers of other ranks deployed to man the elections. Also interviewed were IEBC accredited observers, Voters and Party agents. The team also met and interviewed the IEBC Isiolo County Election Manager Mr. Wario Ibrahim, IEBC Mbeere Constituency Returning Officer Mr. Maingi Mwangi and the IEBC Malava Constituency Returning Officer Mr. Salim Abdallah Salim.

2 Findings and Analysis

2.1 Presence of the National Police Service officers

In Isiolo- South Constituency by-elections, officers from various formations i.e. KPS, CIPU, GSU, NPR and DCI deployed to offer security at both the Polling and the Tallying Centre. The officers were drawn from different police facilities from Isiolo and Meru counties under the command of Garbatulla Sub-County commander. Female officers from CIPU manned the tallying centre while all the other polling centres were manned by KPS/ CIPU male officers. Notably there were no female officers deployed to man, the polling stations since Garbatulla Sub-county staff strength has no KPS female officers. Embu and Kakamega County Police Commander were the overall commanders overseeing security during the by-elections and assisted by the various Sub County Police Commanders in their respective jurisdictions. In polling centres visited by IPOA, security was majorly provided by NPS Officers. Other Security agencies such as private Security guards, KWS and KFS were not present at various Polling centres. Male officers deployed to man the election were more than female officers. Monitors also noted that in polling centres with many streams, at least a female officer was available. Where streams were few, officers were mainly men. It was observed that the deployment was effective and wide spread, which was a mark of preparedness.

The main gate to the Isiolo- South Constituency tallying centre and entrance to the Tallying Hall were manned by GSU- 'W' Company from Mutuati Sub County- Meru County and CIPU officers respectively. On 26th Feb. 2026 evening road blocks were erected 200meters from the main entrance, stop and search was being conducted by GSU officers restricting entry only to IEBC officials and Observers.

2.2 Identification of officers

Only the commanders of the operations had identification badges, the rest of the police officers were not identifiable by their names or service numbers contrary to Rule 10 of the Sixth Schedule that requires every police officer in uniform to, at all-times, affix a nametag or identifiable Service number on a clearly visible part of the uniform.

2.3 Training and briefing of the of Officers

Operation orders were prepared by respective NPS leaders; Embu County Police Commander Madam Serah Koki, Kakamega County Police Commander Mr. Tom O. Achiya (SSP) and Garbatulla Police Sub-County Commander Mr. Pius Mbithi. The orders were then issued to the officers during a brief held on 25th February, 2026 in respective tallying centers; Garbatulla High School, St. Bakhita Siakago Girls, and Imbiakhalo Comprehensive Primary School. NPS leadership present and IEBC officials briefed the officers on the 'Do's and Don'ts' and the expected code of conduct while performing their duties during the election process. Other IEBC staff were also in attendance during the briefing session. After the briefing was concluded, the officers were deployed to various registration centres. For each polling station, two officers were deployed to provide the necessary security. It was noted that officers did not undergo any security electoral training apart from the briefing done.

Officers deployed from Meru County were not present for the briefing but they were briefed by their respective commanders (Ward and Sub-County Commanders) from where they were drawn. After the briefing was concluded, the officers were deployed to their respective registration centres.

2.4 Facilitation and Welfare of the Officers

During the by-elections Police Officers were provided with dry food (bread and milk). In Isiolo-South constituency officers were also provided with water, soda, and hot meals at the tallying centre. On 25th Feb. 2026 after Police briefing, Police officers present were given Kshs. 500 lunch allowance by IEBC officials. However, it was noted that officers drawn from Meru County were not issued with the monies since they had not arrived for the briefing. The discrepancy was brought to the attention of the in- Charge and he assured payment will be made together with the other allowances. The Police officers were provided transport to and from the Polling centres, though in the evening after conclusion of the Elections, officers from the nearby Police facilities had no means to return to their work station hence hiking lift from other motorists. They were still armed and this exposed them to risks of losing the firearms.

In the Embu and Kakamega ward by-elections, allowances were only promised during the briefings.

2.5 Police operations at the Polling centers

All the polling centres were sufficiently guarded by deployed NPS police officers. Each polling station had two officers as required by the IEBC. Security officers were professional during the voting process. The entrance to the polling centres were not manned apart from the tallying centre where various NPS Senior Commanders were present. In all the polling centres visited, one officer was providing security outside the centre while another was at the entrance to ensure that those queuing were orderly. In the tallying centre security was beefed up with checks at the gate. They did their job well under the circumstances. IPOA monitors did not observe any electoral offence.

No search was being conducted in these centres. However, those who had suspicious items were required to declare what they were and advised accordingly.

2.6 Working hours

Officers providing Security worked for at least 48 hours. Some officers especially those manning the tallying centre worked for more than 48 hours without a formal break. The NPS Act, section 46(2) requires Police Officers working hours to be reasonable. This section further allows Police Officers to have a minimum time of rest during and in between shifts.

2.7 Crowd control Equipment

Police officers were relatively prepared for crowd control. In terms of numbers, the Police were much prepared. They however lacked enough crowd control tools. Most police officers were only armed with guns with a few having tear gas canisters and batons. The stand-by rioting team had protective riot gears including teargas and body armours. The Commanders stated that they had been adequately equipped in case of any eventualities including rioting groups.

2.8 Police responses to incidences

At BIBI Water Supply 1 polling Centre, a voter after marking the ballot paper took a snap shoot of the same which was an Election malpractice. The Presiding officer on seeing this called upon the Police officer who through his intervention the voter was instructed to delete the photo, and he complied. There were various incidences of disorder that arose especially at a few polling centres in Evurore ward. The disorder was mainly occasioned by the goons

from various aspirants and politicians. In all the incidences, police officers responded promptly and impartially. They were also professional in the way they responded. Excessive force was not used at all. As a result, there were no arrests, serious injuries or deaths. All the other polling centres all was calm, with no incidences observed or reported.

2.9 Emerging Areas for Police Attention

The following are emerging as areas of attention by the Service

i. Dealing with leaders who incite youths against other political leaders before, during and after any election/by-election day.
ii. Lack of awareness on police role during elections amongst the members of public.
iii. Goonism
iv. Some officers in Embu were drunk at the time of dispatch to polling centres.

2.10 Concerns and challenges

i. Long working hours for officers especially those deployed from Meru County; since they travelled overnight and deployed to their respective stations upon arrival.
ii. Officers were not well informed of how much allowance will be paid for the work done.
iii. Lunch allowance of Kshs. 500 was not issued to all officers especially the team that was drawn from Meru County. It was also noted that lunch allowance was not provided to Police officers in Muminji, Evurore and Kabras- West Wards by-elections.
iv. Transport lapse for officers returning to their work stations after elections especially those from nearby Police facilities.
v. Inadequate staff strength to deploy to all the polling centres within the Constituency hence leading to only one officer guarding a polling centre in Isiolo South.
vi. Changing of Polling Centres due to Natural disaster (Floods) and tribal clashes between the Somali and Boran communities at Korbesa; hence causing confusion to the voters and delays in voting due to redirection of voters.
vii. Lack of refresher training for officers on electoral security.
viii. Lack of Female officers offering security at the Polling centres.
ix. Meals (Bread and Milk) offered improper for officers who have underlying conditions such as Diabetes. Drinking water provided to the officer was insufficient considering the hot weather in the areas of Isiolo South.

3 Conclusion

The security organs had anticipated that the by-election would be chaotic. The NPS was well prepared to police the by-elections. They deployed enough personnel to beef up the security during the exercise. Voting, tallying and result announcement was peaceful. There were no incidents of human rights violations occasioned by the Police. The elections were peaceful due to effective policing. However, operational gaps were identified and should be addressed.

4 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the monitoring, the Authority recommends the following:

4.1 Identification of Officers:

During this by-election, only the commanders were identifiable by either a nametag or Service number. All junior officers who were doing the real work were not identifiable. The officer in

charge/commanders should ensure that at all times Officers are easily identifiable by having their names/numbers prominently displayed, with strict adherence to Rule 10 of the Sixth Schedule to the NPS Act, 2011. This will enhance accountability of individual Officers while at the same time ensuring professionalism and discipline in line with Article 244 of the Constitution.

4.2 Crowd control tools

The NPS should improve on providing officers with adequate crowd control tools. Deploying them with lethal weapons only is dangerous in case assemblies become rioters. NPS should invest in equipping officers with less lethal tools as well as protective gear for the officers. This will go a long way in preventing serious injuries and deaths during quelling of public disorder.

4.3 Food and allowances

IEBC should consider paying Officers their allowances before deployment. The content of this allowance should also be made clear to the officers (is it accommodation, is it extraneous etc.). In addition, the Commission should improve on the quality and quantity of food and water provided to all election officials. All these efforts will go a long way in boosting the morale of the officers.

4.4 Training and Capacity Building

NPS should ensure continuous training of Officers on electoral matters as well as emerging trends in technology and areas such as goonism.

4.5 Awareness/ Sensitisation

Public awareness is highly required on the role of the Police during election period.

4.6 NPS to address the the emerging trend of goonism

The National Police Service should arrest the goonism strategy currently in use by politicians. Goonism is a threat to electoral processes. It also injures the reputation of the National Police Service in the sense that its capacity to offer security is doubted.

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