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For Immediate Release

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## **Laikipia Farmers' Association**

### **LFA condemns the murder of six police officers by gunmen and fresh lawlessness ahead of national elections**

**Nanyuki, (LFA 14 July 2017)** - The LFA condemns the murders of six police officers in Laikipia on 12<sup>th</sup> July and sends condolences to the families for their tragic loss. This unprovoked attack occurred when Pokot gunmen ambushed a convoy of Anti-Stock Theft Unit – ASTU officers on patrol near Kamwenje in Laikipia West. Four other officers were injured. The attackers looted police bodies of their service weapons and ammunition. They remain at large in the area where they have for months terrorised local smallholder farmers. Since the killings hundreds of residents have fled their homes because of the chronic lawlessness.

These crimes are the latest in a pattern of violence escalating across the constituencies of Laikipia West and particularly Laikipia North ahead of national elections on 8<sup>th</sup> August. Many witnesses allege militant Samburu and Pokot politicians are driving the lawlessness for political reasons. After months of inciting farm invasions by armed herders and their livestock, the politicians' strategy now appears to be to use violence to displace local communities who support alternative election candidates. Many fear the aim is to make parts of Laikipia ungovernable so that it will be impossible to hold free and fair elections on the day.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July, gunmen burned and looted the tourism facility at Suyian Soul Camp for the second time this year. The arson was committed by at least 17 Samburu gunmen who engaged ASTU officers and members of the Kenya Defence Forces – KDF in a firefight lasting several hours. The attackers also fired on a small aircraft flown by an LFA member conducting aerial surveillance of the scene.

Freshly orchestrated invasions deploying gunmen and some 50,000 cattle are hitting smallholders, resident pastoralists and ranches alike. Militant politicians claim attacks on Laikipia's ranches have occurred because of their supporters' need for pasture. But it has been raining since April across Laikipia and neighbouring counties and drought is a smokescreen for the true reasons behind the violence. LFA members employ 4,500 staff from multiple ethnic communities and many of these are unlikely to vote for militant politicians inciting the invasions. The aim once again appears to be to displace potential voters by attacking businesses, despite the loss of billions of shillings to Laikipia's economy.

LFA members are grateful to the Government of Kenya for acknowledging the

problem of invasions and for providing resources to restore law and order. Unfortunately security agencies have become overstretched ahead of the elections.

In the current environment of lawlessness, it will be difficult to hold free and fair elections in affected parts of Laikipia. The LFA calls for the deployment of election monitors in Laikipia North polling stations to guard against fraud by these very same individuals inciting the violence – and it urges all people in Laikipia to desist from actions that will deny Kenyans the ability to exercise their democratic rights.

**ENDS**

For more details, including interviews with the LFA chair or specific members, please email [elodiesampere@yahoo.com](mailto:elodiesampere@yahoo.com). For more information and news from the LFA, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Laikipia Farmers' Association is authorised to talk on behalf of all of its members and can quickly find information for reporters directly from the parties concerned. We encourage journalists to approach us with any requests for information they may have, rather than trying to contact our members individually.