

Somali militants massacre Kenyan university students

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Somali militants reportedly linked with the Islamic fundamentalist group al Shabaab killed at least 147 and wounded at least 79 during an attack against Kenya's Garissa University Thursday.

Arriving before dawn, the militants launched an attack lasting more than 15 hours, throwing grenades and shooting at students and staff with automatic rifles. Four gunmen were involved in the assault. All four militants killed themselves in the late evening by detonating suicide bombs while exchanging fire with government forces, local officials said.

The attack was organized by Kenyan national Mohamed Dulyadeyn, close associate of al Shabaab chief Ahmed Omar Abu Ubeyd, according to media reports. Dulyadeyn helped construct al Shabaab's network by recruiting members out of the massive refugee camp at Dadaab, and was involved in planning the 2013 Westgate mall attack in Nairobi, according to sources cited by the *Guardian*.

The Kenyan government has declared a new state of emergency in regions bordering Somalia, in response to the attacks.

As with Boko Haram in Nigeria, Shabaab's terrorist attacks will undoubtedly serve as the pretext for escalated American military intervention, as recent comments from US military leaders and pundits have made clear.

"Basically, we are witnessing the birth of a Kenyan Boko Haram," an unnamed top Western diplomat said in comments cited by the *Financial Times*.

In Senate testimony this week, General David Rodriguez, head of the Pentagon's Africa Command (AFRICOM), warned that al Shabaab "remains a persistent threat to US and regional interests," in remarks calling for expanded US interventions in Libya, Nigeria and Somalia.

Familiar efforts are underway to limit analysis of the Garissa massacre to discussion of "terrorism" in the service of Islamist ideology. Western media have played up reports that the al Shabaab fighters intentionally targeted Christian students, while sparing some Muslim students, and have brandished tenuous claims of links to al Qaeda and other Islamist formations.

The leaders of al Shabaab and other Islamist militias represent dissident factions of their respective national bourgeois elites. Their anti-imperialist appeals are cynical and calculated attempts to exploit popular hatred of the US and European governments. But the horrific murder of innocents only serves the interests of imperialism, which is ultimately responsible for the emergence of such groups in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The US and European powers have sought to strengthen their military and political grip in these regions and reestablish direct colonial rule through endless military interventions and proxy wars since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. During this period, the US has fomented nearly two decades of civil war in Somalia, waged unrelenting drone and commando wars, and exploited the chaos to impose an indefinite military occupation of the country by the US-sponsored African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) force.

Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, the US supported Somali dictator Mohamed Siad Barre as part of its strategy to counter Soviet influence in neighboring Ethiopia. Washington responded to the 1992 overthrow of Barre by tribal-based militants by deploying US ground troops to invade Somalia.

Forced to withdraw in 1994, the US has since utilized local militaries and warlord factions to maintain its political domination over the Horn of Africa.

When the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an Islamist network that developed in Somalia's political vacuum from the 1990s onward, temporarily wrested control over the capital at Mogadishu from the US-installed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2006, Washington responded by organizing a new invasion of the country, led by Ethiopian forces, which displaced the ICU and returned the TFG to power in the capital.

Al Shabaab subsequently developed out of the breakup of the ICU in the wake of the 2006 invasion. Al Shabaab claims that the recent series of attacks against Kenyan targets are retribution for Kenya's invasion and occupation of Somalia, which began in October 2011 and continues to the present under the umbrella of the US-backed AMISOM occupation force defending the TFG.

For well over a decade the US has maintained Special Forces deployments on both the Yemeni and Somali sides of the Gulf of Aden and pummeled both side of the Gulf with drone strikes in an effort to maintain control over some of the most heavily trafficked commercial sea routes worldwide. The US is now backing the Saudi-led bombing campaign and preparations for a ground assault and occupation of Yemen.

Al Shabaab is a product of the murderous intervention of US imperialism in the Horn of Africa, unfolding over two decades. Responsibility for Garissa lies ultimately with the war planners in Washington and the numerous fake-left parties that have justified US wars in Africa under the banner of "democracy and human rights."



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