

Anger as Kenya's President Ruto forms government with Orange Democratic Movement opposition

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Anger has spread across social media on X, Tik Tok and Instagram after four members of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by millionaire Raila Odinga—the main party of the Azimio la Umoja opposition coalition—joined the Kenyan government of President William Ruto.

This includes ODM chairman John Mbadi (Treasury and National Planning), former Kakamega governor Wycliffe Oparanya (Trade and Cooperatives), former Mombasa governor Hassan Joho (Mining and Blue Economy) and MP Opiyo Wandayi (Energy and Petroleum).

“The Gen X have been protesting for months and now the move has been hijacked by the opposition to secure seats in government,” said a medical student on X. Dennis wrote, “How Raila has been able to take full advantage of this is crazy”. Kiprop, said “ODM have joined the GOVERNMENT to DOUBLE DOWN corruption. RAILA has cashed out OUR SOULS. May our souls find PEACE.” “I am beginning to believe that Raila Odinga runs for the presidency not to win but for business,” said another.

This is the first time the opposition has joined the government since Odinga took up the post of prime minister in then-President Mwai Kibaki’s cabinet in 2008 to stabilise capitalist rule, after post-election violence left over 1,200 dead and 600,000 internally displaced.

Ruto declared, “I have decided we form a government that will unify all of us so that every Kenyan will now play a part in building the nation.” Odinga said in a statement to journalists Friday that ODM’s representatives “will contribute positively to national development.”

Far from opening a new era of national unity and development, the new Cabinet’s first task is to crush the months of protests, escalate International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity to finance debt which now stands at 68 percent of GDP, and maintain Kenya’s status as Washington’s non-NATO proxy force for its imperialist wars across Africa and the Caribbean.

For over six weeks, millions of young people, workers and sections of the middle class—crossing tribal lines long exploited by the Kenyan ruling class and spanning major cities and towns

across Kenya—have protested Ruto’s IMF-imposed austerity attacks, amid soaring costs of living.

The Ruto-Odinga deal has the hallmarks of having been designed by Washington. On Thursday, Ruto spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who approved the new cabinet. A statement by spokesperson Matthew Miller said Blinken commanding the blood-soaked president “for his pledge of accountability for security forces allegedly involved in protest violence or responsible for disappearances and his commitment to direct police to refrain from using violence of any kind against protesters. The Secretary thanked President Ruto for Kenya’s contributions to the multinational security support mission to Haiti.”

The closing of ranks is a warning. Ruto and Raila are coming together to impose the full burden of the economic crisis on working people. In Ruto’s words, “From now onwards, we will all seek ways of raising revenue together and paying our debts.” Significantly, ODM will be given Finance, in charge of social cuts and tax hike, and Energy, responsible for reviewing fuel prices. This saw the government increase the hated Road Maintenance Levy (fuel levy) by 39 percent.

ODM’s incoming minister of finance must now cut spending by 1.3 billion shillings, after Ruto withdrew the hated Finance Bill 2024 which included savage tax hikes on basic goods and services. The cuts will affect education, public healthcare, infrastructure development and other social expenses. There are also plans to dissolve or privatise 47 state corporations, which will mean thousands of civil servants losing their jobs.

The new cabinet is on a collision course with the working class and rural masses. Teachers are threatening to strike over the non-payment of the 9.5 percent wage increases promised and the permanent employment of 47,000 intern teachers. Civil servants are protesting wage freezes, while bus drivers and other transport workers are planning strikes in response to the fuel levy. Doctors and clinical officers continue to fight underfunding that severely impacts health service delivery. Mass anger has erupted among farmers after the state-owned Kenya Seed Company announced it was increasing the prices of maize seeds. Maize is a staple in Kenya.

The coalition government will not address the violent crackdown on protesters, as Odinga claims. This was clear in Ruto's announcement that Kithure Kindiki, former Interior Cabinet Secretary, would again be nominated for this role. Provocatively, half of the previous cabinet has been renominated, just two weeks after Ruto dissolved his government.

Kindiki led the violent crackdown on protesters. According to human rights organisations, 60 protesters were killed, most shot by the police. Additionally, there were 66 abductions, with some abductees later released while others remain missing. The crackdown resulted in 1,376 arrests and 601 injuries. Among those injured are individuals permanently maimed, such as 17-year-old Arnold Abuya, who now relies on a catheter after a police bullet severely damaged his groin.

The Ruto regime has also regularly banned protests, violating the constitution, and sent state-sanctioned goons to terrorise protesters. The regime is now quashing any party attempting to register under names of "Gen Z" under the pretext that they lack "inclusivity."

Testament to the bankruptcy of the post-independence Kenyan political system, the official opposition now falls to 70-year old Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, who declared, "I will now take over his [Odinga's] role of being opposition leader in Kenya."

Musyoka served for decades under the brutal dictatorship of Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002), as Foreign Affairs Minister, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and National Organising Secretary of KANU, the only legal party under Moi.

The Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), which comprises 36 trade unions representing over 1.5 million workers, has backed the "broad-based government." Secretary General Francis Atwoli said on Saturday, "This is the kind of government we need." He defended Odinga against the mass outrage on social media, saying, "Raila [Odinga] has never abandoned Kenyans, the freedom we enjoy today was worn through his efforts because he sacrificed greatly for this country and his past sacrifices deserve recognition."

Since the 1990s, Raila has been branded as the leader of the "second liberation" movement for democracy. However, he is just another well-paid stooge of imperialism.

Odinga is one of the wealthiest politicians in Kenya, with an estimated net worth of \$500 million to \$1.3 billion. He has played the role of lightning rod of mass opposition to the ruling class. Fearing any working class offensive that would threaten its place in the established order, ODM has joined the existing violent military-police state order.

Atwoli's statement is the latest stage of COTU's role in strangling working class opposition to the Ruto regime. Initially, he defended Ruto's savage Finance Bill 2024 to raise \$2.7 billion. Subsequently, COTU celebrated Ruto's withdrawal of the bill to quell anger and buy time amid mass protests, and then praised Ruto's maneuver of dissolving his

government to form a coalition with the opposition. At no point has COTU opposed the deployment of Kenya Defence Forces to patrol the streets and the banning of protests, or opposed IMF austerity measures.

The struggles against the Ruto-Odinga regime can only be waged by organisations of rank-and-file workers, mobilised independently of the bureaucracies and capitalist parties against austerity, capitalism and imperialist war.

Defeating imperialism requires building an alternative on the left. The basis for this is the defence of Permanent Revolution by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution holds that the capitalist class can no longer lead the struggles for democracy as it did in the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century in the United States and France. Fearful of the proletariat and—in ex-colonial countries like Kenya—dependent on foreign imperialism, the capitalists must oppose democratic rule. Democracy can be established only by the working class seizing state power and placing all the resources of the economy under the control of the workers and oppressed masses. as part of the struggle for world socialist revolution.

In this struggle, workers must turn to their class brothers internationally, where there is also overwhelming popular hostility to the IMF, the imperialist powers and the banks and corporations. Across the African continent and internationally, the ruling class faces an explosion of social anger against mass unemployment, soaring cost of living, and rampant social inequality. They are aware they could soon be convulsed by a mass popular uprising akin to Kenya, including in Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, and South Africa.

The critical task is the building of independent revolutionary parties, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, including a Kenyan section, to overthrow the corrupt African bourgeois regimes and build a United Socialist States of Africa.



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