

Stalinist Communist Party Marxist-Kenya seeks new political trap for rising discontent among workers, youth—Part Two

Kipchumba Ochieng
5 March 2025

This is the second of a three-part series. Part One was published on March 4, 2025 and Part Three was published on March 6, 2025.

How the CPM-K betrayed the Gen-Z protests

The Gen-Z protests of 2024 marked a turning point in Kenya, as mass opposition to Ruto's IMF-driven austerity erupted into a nationwide rebellion. Despite the combativeness displayed by workers and youth during the protests and the subsequent strike wave, revealing the potential for a direct confrontation with the Kenyan state, the IMF and imperialism, the movement was ultimately contained and defused. This is not due to a lack of militancy, but the absence of a political leadership willing to take up the struggle for socialism and internationalism.

That potential was systematically sabotaged—not by state repression alone, but by the deliberate intervention of forces like the CPM-K. Rebranded as a radical alternative after its leaders deserted to join the Ruto government in 2022, the Maoist party positioned itself as a champion of the protests while simultaneously working to steer them into safe channels, thus exposing the party as a tool of the bourgeoisie.

The CPM-K's intervention in the Gen-Z protests was encapsulated in one of its earliest statements following the release of the IMF-dictated Finance Bill 2024 in mid-June, which ignited widespread public outrage. As demonstrations erupted in Nairobi and spread to other parts of Kenya—including the port city of Mombasa and even Eldoret, a traditional stronghold of Ruto in the Rift Valley—the party, still operating as the CPK at the time, responded with a call for protests as a way of pressuring Ruto to “listen” to the people.

In its June 19 statement, “Unmasking Ruto's Betrayal and Mobilizing for Kenya's Sovereignty and Justice,” the CPK declared: “We will exert maximum pressure to lead all processes necessary to remove Ruto from office and hold him accountable for his ongoing crimes,” before adding, “The path forward for President Ruto, if he dares to take it, is clear: he must listen to the people, address their needs, and act with honesty and integrity.” It

then acknowledged the bankruptcy of this appeal, adding, “Yet, we recognize that such a course correction is unlikely. ... We will not rest until Ruto is removed from power and prosecuted”.

Ruto did not listen, let alone resign. Over the following days, mass protests erupted, spiking on June 25 when the bill containing tax hikes and levies on basic goods was passed in parliament. Police gunned down hundreds of protestors across the country, leaving 50 dead and hundreds of injured, as the parliament was stormed and set alight. That night, Ruto denounced protestors as criminals, imposed a state of emergency and deployed the military onto the streets of Nairobi—the first time in the history of Kenya that troops were deployed against unarmed civilian protests.

The CPK refused to call on workers to strike against the state of emergency, let alone appeal to the African and international working class to mobilise in solidarity to stop Ruto's attempts to install a military dictatorship. Instead, in its June 26 statement “Ruto Resign or Be Overthrown”, the CPK declared, “Members of parliament had a chance to avert this crisis by rejecting the IMF-sponsored bill but chose to side with greed, blaming peaceful protestors instead.” It continued, “Tomorrow, the Kenyan masses will take to the streets in peaceful demonstration, as per the Kenyan constitution ..., demanding that Ruto reject the finance bill.”

Ruto, fearing an ever greater explosion of social opposition after the June 25 massacre, withdrew the bill the following day. It was part of a conspiracy hatched among the ruling class, closely worked out with the US and European Union, to buy time to suppress the protests and reimpose the tax hikes and privatisations.

As the WSWs warned, “Despite some sections of the population viewing this as a victory, Ruto intends to work out the best way to impose IMF austerity in collusion with the opposition Azimio la Umoja coalition [of Raila Odinga] and the trade union bureaucracy led by the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU).”

On June 27, aware that it could no longer sustain the appeals for Ruto to listen, the CPK mixed them with calls for his resignation. Its statement “Too Little, Too Late: Ruto Must Resign” declared, “We must not allow Ruto to escape accountability for the innocent blood he has shed in the streets. These demonstrations have clear and simple demands that *we insist the President comply with* [emphasis added].”

It concluded with a list of social and political demands, such as a

total cessation of taxes on food, healthcare, and education, the rejection of the Finance Bill 2024, an immediate end to the interference in Kenya of the World Bank, IMF, NATO, provision of decent jobs, free healthcare and free education—with no explanation of who is to implement them. It concluded with the rhetorical flourish, “President Ruto, your time is up! The people of Kenya reject your bloodstained hands and your corrupt administration.”

The CPK refused to expose the leader of the opposition, billionaire Raila Odinga, who was working behind the scenes for a national unity government with Ruto to suppress social opposition, or the trade union bureaucracy, led by Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU) boss Francis Atwoli.

Atwoli repeatedly indicated that he was happy to work with Ruto, concerned that the protests were damaging Kenyan profits. “Kenya is a hub of economic activities in this region, and we must protect it at all costs. We must support the President and the government to ensure that this country remains peaceful,” he said.

Above all, the CPK was hostile to any appeal to the international working class, as solidarity protests spread in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Mozambique, fuelled by the same conditions. The CPK insisted that the Gen-Z struggle should be limited to a campaign to achieve limited social and democratic reforms within the framework of the bankrupt Kenyan capitalist state and the 2010 Constitution.

The following week CPK posted a statement under the title, “A Yellow Card for President Ruto”, which said the government “had a real opportunity to reject this oppressive bill, but they squandered it until the Kenyan masses forced their hand.” It then offered to support a government without Ruto to stabilise capitalist rule, stating, “Our immediate task is to build the highest level of organisation with the best leaders to govern a post-Ruto Kenya.”

The CPK insisted that the struggle for socialism was not the immediate task, but the building of a “pro-people regime.” The “youth want jobs, food, housing, and basic life necessities to live a life of dignity... People need accountability, respect, and transparency in governance. These are very rational demands. The Kenyan people are crying loudly that they want a sovereign country, not to be ruled by dogs of great powers. They are crying for a pro-people regime change that shall raise the glorious flag of Kenya, soaked in the blood of martyrs, to greater heights.”

It then offered itself as an alternative “pro-poor people organization with selfless leaders,” arguing that a governmental role would “deflate government propaganda that misrepresents our movement and its aims.”

When the Gen Z protests subsided and paved the way for a broader intensification of the class struggle, marked by mass strikes, CPK refused to even comment on these struggles, let alone denounce the role of the trade union bureaucracy in suppressing the strikes. The unions, working closely with the Kenyan state, called strikes only to call them off in the last minute or after a vague promise of wage increases which never came.

The breathing space provided by forces dominating the Gen-Z protests like the CPK allowed Ruto to cobble together a national unity government with Odinga’s opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), backed by the Central Organisation of Trade

Unions (COTU), and install Kithure Kindiki, the blood-stained interior minister, as deputy president. Kindiki spearheaded the brutal suppression of the Gen-Z protests.

Since the installation of the new national unity government, Ruto is gradually re-imposing the tax hikes, cuts in social expenditure and privatisations he had been forced to withdraw in June as a manoeuvre to stem social opposition, vindicating the warnings of the *World Socialist Web Site*. To date, he has continued to strengthen the police state, banning and teargassing peaceful protests and carrying out abductions to terrorise social opposition, in close collaboration with the former opposition ODM and the trade union bureaucracy of COTU.

The CPM-K has itself been targeted for repression, with its members abducted, arrested and even shot during protests. Last January, its General Secretary Omole was targeted for assassination. Yet, this has not deterred the party from continuing to appeal to Ruto. After the assassination attempt, Omole issued a pathetic statement, pleading for protection with the very capitalist state that targeted him. He said:

Today, I also wish to inform the public that officers from the Serious Crimes Unit visited my residence and commenced an investigation into this attack. We cooperated fully, and I now urge the state to conduct a clear, transparent, and professional investigation. This is a critical opportunity for the state to absolve itself of any suspicion of involvement by ensuring that those behind this heinous act are brought to justice swiftly and decisively. The Kenyan people deserve nothing less, as it is our taxes that entrust the state with the responsibility of protecting the lives of all citizens without exception.

This is ridiculous. The capitalist state with the assistance of the police imposes the dictatorship of the capitalist class. That is what Kenya is witnessing first hand. The task facing workers is not to reform the capitalist state, let alone ask it to investigate its own crimes, but to build their own independent organs of struggle and transfer power to these organisations in a socialist revolution.

By opposing any struggle for the building of a socialist leadership in the working class, the Maoists sowed disorientation, leading to an eventual demobilisation of the Gen-Z struggles and the wave of strikes that erupted afterwards. If Ruto can continue with austerity and tax hikes, and brazenly embrace US imperialist foreign policy, this is above all due to the bankruptcy of forces like CPM-K, who act as enablers of Ruto.

To be continued.



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact