

Kenya's Ruto government bloodbath against Gen Z protests

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Hundreds of thousands took to the streets across Kenya Wednesday, with protests erupting in at least 27 of the country's 47 counties, marking one year since the Gen Z uprising that culminated in the storming of Parliament on June 25, 2024.

President William Ruto once again resorted to mass violence, unleashing a brutal crackdown involving live ammunition, teargas, water cannons, and the deployment of state-funded thugs to attack demonstrators.

As of this writing, at least 16 people have been killed by gunshot wounds and over 400 injured according to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. Among the confirmed dead are a secondary school student. With injuries mounting and reports still coming in from across the country, the death toll is certain to rise.

As police unleashed brutal violence, Ruto fled Nairobi, retreating to the coast under the flimsy pretext of attending the funeral of the Kilifi Governor's father, a politically irrelevant figure. Flanking Ruto at the event were Senate Speaker Amason Kingi and former Prime Minister and billionaire Raila Odinga.

Odinga, who once postured as an opposition leader, is a pillar of the "broad-based government," supporting Ruto as he imposes International Monetary Fund austerity and police violence. Their presence at the funeral, far from the capital in flames, laid bare the regime's fear of the working class and youth.

Organised largely through social media, with no backing among the main bourgeois parties and trade unions, the protests were mobilised via platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and X, using hashtags such as #OccupyStateHouse, #OccupyUntilVictory, #RutoMustGo and #SiriNiNumbers, which trended for days.

What unfolded was a nationwide political revolt. Entire swathes of the country ground to a halt, with major businesses, banks, and markets closed across urban centres. As with last year's uprising, the protests transcended the tribal and regional divisions long exploited by the Kenyan ruling elite to maintain power. This was a movement united

in a common struggle against police brutality, authoritarian rule, austerity, and the soaring cost of living.

In Nairobi's central business district (CBD), thousands marched bearing flags and placards with the faces of those murdered in last year's uprising, chanting "Ruto must go" as the military stationed itself at strategic locations like Nyayo Stadium. Government offices were barricaded with razor wire. The marches mostly started peacefully, until police lobbed teargas and fired batons and live ammunition.

Clashes erupted across the CBD, as protesters resisted attempts to disperse them. Meanwhile, the state moved to choke off access to the capital, setting up roadblocks along major roads while Kenya Railways suspended all commuter train services to prevent protesters entering the city centre. The determination of the protest forced lawmakers to flee the parliamentary buildings out of fear of a possible breach.

In the working-class neighbourhoods of Ngara and Pipeline, youth battled and, in some instances, overpowered the police.

In the port city of Mombasa, thousands began the day with peaceful vigils and were met with batons and teargas. Tensions escalated into running battles through the streets.

Similar scenes erupted in Nakuru, Nyeri, and Kisii. Even in smaller counties in rural areas such as Kajiado, Makeni, and Embu, protests erupted. In Ol Kalou, the police station was set on fire after police killed a man.

In Eldoret, a key stronghold for Ruto during the 2022 elections, youth marched waving Kenyan flags and chanting anti-Ruto slogans. Confrontations intensified after demonstrators spotted state-funded goons aiming to sow chaos. "We don't want goons here. There are some armed groups among us. Please tell them not to attack us. We are not causing any harm, we are peaceful," protestors shouted. Their chants were "We do not trust the government—not even the judiciary."

In parts of Nairobi, a few bourgeois opposition figures made brief appearances at the protests early in the morning. Among them was former Chief Justice David Maraga, a conservative jurist now positioning himself for a 2027

presidential bid on a pro-business, law-and-order and anti-corruption platform. Also present was Wiper Party leader Kalonzo Musyoka, a veteran of Kenya's political establishment and a former high-ranking official in the brutal, Western-backed Daniel arap Moi regime (1978-2002).

The mass demonstration across the country emerged in defiance of an open declaration of war by the entire ruling class the days before. On Monday, Government Spokesperson Isaac Mwaura declared, "There will be no demonstrations", as *The Standard* revealed how the government was mobilising goons to suppress the protests.

The following day the Kenyan government gave carte blanche to the police to unleash mass violence. Ruto made a speech addressed "To the men and women who wear the uniform ... I give you my full assurance: the Government of Kenya will stand with you," as security forces "protect our country and keep our people and property safe."

On the day, the Communications Authority of Kenya ordered a halt to all live television and radio coverage of the demonstrations. Free-to-air signals for KTN and NTV were disabled, while internet services slowed dramatically. The Telegram app was restricted.

The embassies of the US, UK, Germany, and Canada issued a statement urging Ruto to respect Kenyans' "right to peaceful assembly and to express themselves." They condemned the use of plainclothes officers in unmarked vehicles, claiming it "erodes public trust," and expressed concern over the deployment of hired goons to sabotage protests.

Their statements were political theatre. These are the very governments that fund, arm, and train Kenya's security forces. They have embraced Ruto on the world stage, lauding him as a "partner in stability," even as his regime jails, abducts, and kills its own citizens in the streets. They are also the principal backers of the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

At home, their contempt for democratic rights is no less brutal. In the US, Trump is deploying ICE agents to kidnap migrants and the army to confront protestors. In Britain, peaceful pro-Palestinian organisations like Palestine Action are being outlawed under the Labor government of Keir Starmer. In France and Germany, mass demonstrations have been banned and met with police crackdowns.

As the WSWs has stressed, the crisis unfolding in Kenya is not an isolated event, but part of a growing international upsurge of youth and workers against austerity, authoritarianism, and imperialist war. One year of struggle, punctuated by protests, uprisings, strikes, and betrayals, has demonstrated that courage alone is not enough. The central task that now confronts the Gen Z movement and the broader working class is the building of a conscious political

leadership, rooted in the working class and armed with a socialist and internationalist programme.

The mass "No Kings" protests in the US, which have mobilised up to 15 million people against Trump's drive toward dictatorship, and the hundreds of thousands protesting the genocide in Gaza in the streets of Europe show that the struggle in Kenya is part of a broader, worldwide revolt.

The decisive question is the unification of the most advanced layers of workers and youth under the banner of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). We urge all politically awakened individuals to study the following analyses published by the WSWs:

- *One year since the Gen-Z Uprising in Kenya: The need for a socialist and internationalist strategy* outlines the NECESSITY for the Gen Z protest to build a socialist leadership grounded in the working class and oriented to the international struggle against capitalism.

- *Stalinist leader of Communist Party Marxist – Kenya (CPM-K) slanders Trotskyism following WSWs exposure* clarifies the historical and programmatic differences between Trotskyism and Stalinism.

- *Stalinist Communist Party Marxist-Kenya seeks new political trap for rising discontent among workers, youth* exposes the "left" forces in Kenya that have for decades disoriented and betrayed the working class.

- *Kenya's Gen Z insurgency, the strike wave and the struggle for Permanent Revolution* shows that Kenya's liberation depends upon conquest of power by the working class based on Permanent Revolution.



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