

As the toll of police killings of Gen-Z protesters mounts, Kenyan Interior Minister says “job well done”

Kipchumba Ochieng**26 June 2025**

In the aftermath of Wednesday's brutal police crackdown on nationwide protests, Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen praised the police for their violence. His remarks signal an escalation in the repressive tactics against social opposition to the “broad-based” government led by President William Ruto and former opposition leader turned ally, Raila Odinga.

Murkomen's words were chilling: “Our security agencies exercised remarkable restraint amid extreme provocation. To our brave officers injured while protecting Kenya against rioters and no doubt hired thugs, we feel your pain and sacrifice that embody the truest expression of patriotism. Thank you for a job well done; you have my full support. There is no police officer who committed any excesses.”

Wednesday saw a powerful nationwide protest led by hundreds of thousands of Kenyans, predominantly youth, who flooded the streets across major cities and towns in the country to commemorate those slain by police violence and to voice their opposition to the authoritarian rule of the Ruto government, IMF-driven austerity, and skyrocketing costs of living. Demonstrations erupted across at least 27 of the country's 47 counties.

The police were deployed to terrorise the population by killing, maiming, and teargassing unarmed protesters. To conceal their actions, many officers wore masks, hoods, and civilian clothing, while others operated without name tags—clear violations of the law.

According to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), at least 16 people were gunned down by police during the protests. These figures are preliminary, with the real toll yet to be fully

revealed as both the police and Ministry of Interior continue to refuse to provide official numbers. Indeed, Amnesty International Kenya has revealed that families who lost loved ones during the protest are being asked by police to bury the victims without post-mortems.

Fatalities were reported in Nairobi's Ngara, Embakasi, Molo, Matuu, Emali, Ol Kalou, Ongata Rongai, Juja, and Kikuyu, making clear there was a nationwide “shoot-to-kill” policy. At least two journalists were injured, and hospitals reported dozens of gunshot casualties. Beyond the fatalities, over 400 individuals have been injured, of which 83 are in critical condition.

The days before the demonstrations, Ruto, Murkomen and police chiefs made repeated pledges to stand with the police to give carte blanche for a massacre. Murkomen has branded the protests a coup, stating it was an “unconstitutional attempt to change the regime of this republic.”

Two protesters, Suleiman Wanjau Bilali and Robert Otiti Elwak, have already been arrested, accused of spreading “inflammatory” content and inciting the youth to storm State House for re-tweeting posts.

Murkomen is now demanding further restrictions on the right to protest, proposing a “legal framework” to operationalise Article 37 of the Constitution that guarantees the right of protest to ensure demonstrations are carried out in an “orderly manner.” The proposed law would require organisers to provide names of planners, the purpose, date, time, and route of demonstrations, to enable police to offer “adequate security”.

A government responsible for abductions and killings and deploying goons to disrupt protests is now asking

protesters to hand over their personal details.

Murkomen also defended the closure of media houses KTN, NTV, and K24, leading television stations, for broadcasting the protests live. He remarked, “Some of the media stations were directing the protesters; that is very irresponsible journalism.”

Murkomen emphasised that the government would not hesitate to silence the media to “save the nation.”

The government is also systematically ratcheting up tribalism to mobilise Ruto’s Kalenjin tribe and Odinga’s Luo against the Kikuyu. Murkomen accused, without any evidence, the organisers of Wednesday’s protests of mobilising people from Nyeri, Murang’a, Thika, and other regions, transporting them to Nairobi to fuel unrest: “These are the same individuals seen looting and robbing citizens on their way home.” These regions are mostly inhabited by Kikuyu, the largest tribe in Kenya.

On the same day, Peter Kaluma, the Homa Bay Town Member of Parliament and ally of Odinga, dismissed the protesters as “the code name for Mt. Kenya insurrection against President Ruto for creating an equitable and inclusive government.” Mt. Kenya, also known as Central Province, is predominantly inhabited by Kikuyu, Meru, and Embu.

Ruto is using the violence it orchestrated to fuel division, playing on ethnic tensions to deflect from its police-state measures, crushing taxes, and austerity policies amid soaring costs of living.

The Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU), representing 36 trade unions and 1.5 million workers, under the long-standing leadership of Francis Atwoli, has refused to condemn Ruto’s violence and instead blamed the protesters for economic losses. On Wednesday, Atwoli said:

People fighting each other will make a lot of investor money, up to half a billion dollars, go to developing countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda. Zanzibar is now taking all our tourists because of quarrels in our country. I would like us to relax. We know Kenya is bigger than all of us. Problems have continued coming up since independence. Our leaders have died, and they will continue to die, and that is how the world works. There is no need of burning the country

for small problems. I appeal to Kenyans, investors, and developers, who are relocating to other countries because of the demonstrations.

The union bureaucracy’s refusal to oppose the government’s violence exposes their role as key accomplices of Ruto’s regime, concerned above all with maintaining their own privileges at the expense of working conditions. This comes as youth unemployment stands at a staggering 67 percent, with terrible working conditions and low salaries that are eaten away by soaring costs of living.

Ruto, Odinga, and Atwoli are part of a universal phenomenon. In all imperialist countries and their former colonies across Africa, bourgeois governments are rapidly rearming, embracing authoritarian methods of governance, and stoking reactionary forces to preserve their rule—driven by the mounting crisis of global capitalism.



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