

# Ruto locks down Nairobi to stop Kenyan protests, police kill 10

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7 July 2025

Just 12 days after orchestrating a bloodbath that left 19 dead and over 400 injured across the country, President William Ruto again deployed armed police to brutally suppress protests. In Nairobi's working-class districts and informal settlements, police opened fire with live ammunition, tear gas, and water cannon, killing 10 and wounding many others.

The protests mark the 35th anniversary of the 1990 Saba Saba uprising, when sections of the bourgeois opposition led demonstrations demanding multiparty elections and an end to the Western-backed rule of then-president Daniel arap Moi, Ruto's political mentor and architect of Kenya's one-party dictatorship.

This year's protests, driven largely by working-class youth, erupted across Kenya's major cities and towns, including Nairobi, Nakuru, Nyeri, Embu, and Ongata Rongai, despite the government's massive security deployment. In Nairobi, police blocked all roads leading to the Central Business District and erected at least 25 barricades across surrounding working-class towns. Central Nairobi was transformed into a ghost town. Schools and shopping malls were shuttered in anticipation of violent repression.

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights last night reported ten fatalities, twenty-nine injuries, two cases of abduction and thirty-seven arrests across seventeen counties.

The Commission recorded numerous hooded officers, not in uniform, traveling in unmarked vehicles patrolling major cities. It noted that state-sanctioned goons wielding wooden clubs, machetes, spears, and bows and arrows operated alongside police.

On the eve of the protests, Public Service Cabinet Secretary Geoffrey Ruku threatened civil servants with disciplinary action if they failed to report to work on July 7. Speaking in Embu County during a church service attended by Ruto, Ruku insisted, "Tomorrow, Monday, is

not a public holiday. All civil servants across the Republic of Kenya are expected to be in their offices regardless."

That same evening, Ruto ordered police to block all access to the city centre and stopped Kenya Railways from operating transportation into Nairobi, making it impossible for government workers to report to their offices. Kenya Defence Forces' elite Green Berets were placed on standby, signalling the regime's growing reliance on the military to suppress opposition.

Regime-backed thugs attacked the offices of the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) in Nairobi. The attackers stormed the building, vandalised property, and disrupted a press conference by KHRC staff and activists. The KHRC is one of the few organisations systematically documenting police killings, injuries, and enforced disappearances.

The crackdown extended to the bourgeois opposition. Wanjiku Thiga, youth leader of Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP), was arrested, released on bail, and then rearrested moments later in a covert DCI-led operation. Peter Kinyanjui, a DCP youth coordinator, was seized by police immediately after leaving court in Ruiru.

No one exposes the bankruptcy of the Kenyan ruling class more clearly than Raila Odinga. Once a leading figure in the 1990 bourgeois opposition's Saba Saba protests, he now sits as a partner in government as Ruto reconstructs the very police state modelled after Moi.

In the lead-up to this year's Saba Saba anniversary, Odinga announced plans for a commemorative gathering at Kamukunji Grounds, the symbolic site of the original protest. But this was to be a tightly stage-managed performance, designed to dissipate popular anger. When Kamukunji Grounds was predictably empty because of the police-manned road blockades, Odinga delivered a press conference from the luxury confines of Nairobi's Serena Hotel.

He cynically proposed “an inclusive intergenerational national conclave to hear our people across all divides and come up with irreducible reforms and changes”. He called for “comprehensive police reforms, focusing on enhancing accountability, transparency and improving police-to-people relations,” as the police of the government he supports were gunning down protestors just kilometres away.

For decades, Odinga has posed as the voice of democratic resistance, only to betray every mass movement that threatened to escape the control of the bourgeois opposition.

After leading protests against Moi’s dictatorship in the 1990s, he joined Moi’s KANU and served as energy minister. In 2008, following the rigged 2007 elections, he entered a power-sharing government with Mwai Kibaki, legitimising a regime responsible for killing over 1,200 of his own supporters. He repeated the betrayal in 2018, embracing then-president Uhuru Kenyatta. In 2023, he briefly mobilised protests against Ruto’s IMF-dictated Finance Bill, only to call them off the moment they threatened to become a powerful movement outside his control. Last year, he joined Ruto in the name of “dialogue”.

Odinga is rapidly losing his grip. In his political base of Luo Nyanza, discontent is boiling over. Last week, in Homa Bay County, thousands of youth carried the coffin of murdered blogger Albert Ojwang and stormed the Mawego Police Post, setting it ablaze. Ojwang had been arrested in Homa Bay and transferred to Nairobi, where he was tortured and killed in police custody. Mourners demanded his body be returned to the site of his arrest. According to family members, Odinga was warned not to attend the burial. *The Standard* reported that it was “the first time Raila was barred from attending a burial in Luo Nyanza,” signalling a historic break with a population long held in check by Odinga’s tribal demagoguery.

Kenya’s crisis is being closely watched by the global financial elite. *The Economist*, the mouthpiece of the “aristocracy of finance” as Marx described it, issued a warning titled, “William Ruto is taking Kenya to a dangerous place.” Ruto’s “authoritarian instincts are propelling a spiral of violence,” it wrote, lamenting that the “spiral of riot and repression is eroding civil liberties and may jeopardise economic reforms.” The magazine expressed concern that “Ruto’s inability to create a consensus could delay or derail much-needed economic reforms,” and called for him to step aside before the 2027 elections in favour of a less discredited figure capable of

enforcing austerity.

Kenya’s deepening crisis is not a product of one man or one government. It is the outcome of decades of capitalist rule by a corrupt bourgeois elite, subservient to imperialism and utterly hostile to the interests of the working masses. The brutal crackdown ordered by Ruto, the complicity of figures like Odinga, and the mounting repression point to one conclusion: the capitalist class has no progressive role to play in Kenyan society.

The warnings issued by *The Economist* reflect the panic within ruling circles internationally. Their concern is not the bloodshed or the assault on democratic rights, but that Ruto’s heavy-handed repression may provoke an uncontrollable uprising that threatens the ability to impose IMF-dictated austerity.

What frightens them most is that the revolt on Kenya’s streets could spark a broader explosion across East and Southern Africa. The same conditions exist throughout the region: dictatorship in Uganda under Museveni, pre-election repression in Tanzania, mass anger in Mozambique, and social tensions boiling over in deeply unequal South Africa. Kenya’s protests are a harbinger of wider revolutionary upheaval.

But spontaneous anger is not enough. The history of Kenya is littered with betrayals by opposition figures who channelled militant popular struggles into the arms of the very regimes they claimed to oppose to protect the capitalist order.

The working class must take its place at the head of this movement, forging a revolutionary leadership based on socialist internationalism. The struggle for democratic rights and economic justice cannot be separated from the fight to overthrow capitalism. That requires a clear political programme based on the construction of a workers’ and farmers’ government, the expropriation of the ruling elite and foreign capital, and the reorganisation of society based on the needs of the many, not the profits of the few.



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