

# Kenya's President Ruto forms alliance with former dictator Moi's KANU party

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Kenyan President William Ruto is moving to integrate the Kenya African National Union (KANU) into his “broad-based” government aimed at stabilising his crisis-ridden regime. Ruto’s government, already encompassing many rival factions of the bourgeoisie, is seeking to draw in the Moi dynasty and the remnants of the former ruling party that for four decades served as the main political instrument of Kenyan capitalism.

Barely a week after the burial of Raila Odinga—the political fixer who for decades diverted mass opposition behind the establishment—Ruto is pressing ahead with the absorption of KANU. Its current leader, Gideon Moi, son of former dictator Daniel arap Moi, is reportedly set to be appointed deputy prime minister. At least three new Cabinet slots could be allocated to KANU “as a reward for future loyalty,” according to the media.

Ruto is also reportedly exploring the possibility of merging his United Democratic Alliance (UDA) with Raila Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), founded in 2005. Formerly the main opposition party, ODM joined Ruto’s government last year amid the eruption of the Gen Z protests, which shook the entire political establishment.

The entry of KANU would convert Kenya into a fully-fledged parliamentary dictatorship. Ruto’s Kenya Kwanza Alliance, ODM’s Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Coalition Party and KANU would bring together 342 MPs of a 349 seat-parliament. Beyond the parliamentary arithmetic, these developments are an attempt to forge unity at the top to suppress the opposition of workers and youth from below, intensify the imposition of International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity, and deepen the assault on democratic rights.

KANU was the party that negotiated independence with British imperialism. Led by Jomo Kenyatta, it oversaw the transfer of power from the colonial administration to a national bourgeoisie that suppressed workers’ and

peasants’ struggles. Under the banners of “Africanisation” and “nation building,” it carried out mass land lootings to enrich itself and integrated Kenya ever more into the orbit of imperialism.

The Moi dictatorship (1978–2002) took this to another level. Backed by Washington and London, Moi enforced IMF structural adjustment programmes that devastated living standards by slashing public spending, privatising state enterprises, and destroying jobs.

As inequality deepened, repression became the defining feature of the regime. Political opponents were imprisoned, tortured, or murdered. Nyayo House torture chambers in the centre of Nairobi became synonymous with state terror, where left-wing students, lecturers and workers were beaten up, doused with cold water, whipped, suffocated, starved and sexually abused. Following the failed 1982 coup attempt of sections of the army, thousands were detained, and between 600 and 1,800 were killed. In the 1984 Wagalla massacre, thousands of Somali Kenyans were executed by the army. The 1990 Saba Saba protests, backed by the capitalist opposition demanding the end of the KANU one-party state, left at least 30 to 100 protesters killed.

Facing mass social opposition, Moi deliberately inflamed tribal divisions to divide the working class and the rural masses. During the 1992 and 1997 elections, KANU-aligned militias, particularly from Moi’s Kalenjin base, carried out attacks on Kikuyu and Luhya communities viewed as opposition supporters. Entire villages were torched, thousands displaced, and an estimated 3,000 people killed.

President Ruto emerged as a product of the Moi regime’s machinery of tribal pogroms and repression. As a youth organiser in the KANU-linked YK’92 network, he played a direct role in attacks on opponents. The same tribalist incitement resurfaced in the 2007–2008 post-election crisis, when over 1,100 were killed and 600,000

displaced. Ruto played a key role, distributing machetes and money to Kalenjin youth to attack other communities across the agricultural-rich Rift Valley.

Ruto's pilgrimage to Gideon Moi's Kabarak home, where he discussed KANU's entry into his government and laid a wreath at Moi's mausoleum, symbolises the coming together of the ruling elite.

Besides Ruto, all Kenya's main political establishment figureheads have links to the old dictator. Former President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-2022) was Moi's handpicked successor in 2002, which launched his rise in national politics. The late Raila Odinga, who was detained and tortured multiple times by Moi's regime, later briefly allied with him through a merger of his National Democratic Party and KANU in 2001 and became his minister of energy. Kalonzo Musyoka, today a nominal opposition figurehead to Ruto, served loyally under Moi for decades, including key ministerial roles and as KANU Secretary General.

Ruto's call for "unity" from above is about enforcing austerity through an expanding police state. Nearly 40 percent of Kenya's public debt is owed to the World Bank and IMF, and debt servicing now consumes more than 63 percent of government revenue, making austerity and tax increases a structural necessity for the ruling class.

Both the IMF and the World Bank are pressing for further cuts. In a recent statement, the IMF said the Ruto government had to implement "measures to enhance fiscal policy credibility, ensure sustainability of public finances and debt, and minimise fiscal, financial, and external sector risks."

Nearly 20 million people already live below the national poverty line, and more than eight in ten workers are trapped in the informal economy without contracts, benefits, or job security. Inflation is cutting down real wages. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, food and non-alcoholic beverages rose 8.4 percent, while costs of housing, water, electricity, and gas continued to climb. The price of a two-kilogram packet of maize flour—a staple for Kenyan households—has risen by between 33 and 65 percent since the start of the year.

The response of the Ruto regime to mounting hardship is repression and state violence. On the day of Odinga's death, while the media celebrated the "national hero," Ruto quietly signed eight draconian bills into law. The Privatisation Act of 2025 paves the way for the wholesale sell-off of public assets, such as the Kenya Pipeline Company and 11 parastatals. The Cybercrimes

Amendment expands digital surveillance and censorship.

Moi's integration into Ruto's government represents the fusion of two wings of the same corrupt bourgeoisie, the KANU dynasty that perfected one-party rule and the Ruto-Odinga clique now enforcing IMF austerity through police repression. It seeks to end the nominal "post-Moi" constitutional order established in 2010, as the regime tears down all limited democratic rights.

Ruto will bring Moi family's Standard Group PLC, one of Kenya's largest media conglomerates and a critic of his administration, into the orbit of state power. The Standard Group controls an extensive media empire, including *The Standard* (the country's oldest daily), the tabloid *The Nairobian*, television stations such as Kenya Television Network (KTN) and its affiliates (KTN News, KTN Farmers), radio stations including Radio Maisha, Spice FM and Vybez Radio, as well as the digital outlet Standard Digital.

For the new generation that took to the streets in 2024 and 2025, these developments are a serious warning. No section of the bourgeois political establishment, neither government nor "opposition," nor their pseudo-left satellites, offers a path forward. All are united in defending capitalism, the source of corruption, inequality, and poverty.

The Kenyan working class and youth must draw the lessons of past betrayals. The struggles against colonialism, dictatorship, and austerity have repeatedly been diverted by nationalist and tribalist politics. What is required is the building of an independent, socialist, and internationalist movement, linked to workers across Africa and the world. The fight against austerity, repression, and imperialist domination must be consciously organised as a struggle for a workers' government that expropriates the capitalist elite, ends Kenya's subjugation to imperialism, and reorganises society on socialist foundations.



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