

# Kenya's Ruto regime arrests TikTok following satirical video

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Kenya's Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) arrested TikTok content creator Peter Maingi Kimani, widely known as Menelik Kimani, last Thursday after tracking him to a hideout in Gatundu.

The 24-year-old had gone underground earlier last week following the widespread circulation of a satirical video against Kenyan President William Ruto. Although he was released Friday, the DCI continues to hold his mobile phone, confiscated without a court order.

In the video, Kimani addressed Ruto, declaring: "President William Ruto; ignore me at your own risk. I ask for a challenge between me and your government." He proclaimed that "a real king doesn't come through the ballot box," but through royal and biblical lineage, asserting that power should be seized "by force." He issued a seven-day ultimatum for the president to "prepare your army for war," claiming he would go to "visit State House" if no response was forthcoming.

These satirical remarks were seized upon by Ruto's "broad-based unity" government—an alliance between the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), founded by the late political fixer Raila Odinga—as a pretext to arrest him. The move forms part of an escalating campaign to intimidate political opposition, particularly social media users.

Days before, Booker Omole, General Secretary of the Communist Party Marxist–Kenya (CPM-K), was seized by plainclothes officers without a warrant, beaten and denied immediate access to legal counsel or medical care days. Omole remains in detention on fabricated and politically motivated charges, including claims of links to a "drug cartel" and to kidnapped Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. He has been transferred to overcrowded Kitengela Remand Prison with a broken

arm, denied bail and subjected to degrading treatment. The next hearing is scheduled for March 9.

After arresting Kimani, the DCI posted a statement that "While freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Constitution, its enjoyment should not be used as a tool to promote or justify the violation of the rights of others". The DCI threatened "that no effort will be spared in addressing any irresponsible use of social media, especially where there is a threat to peace and security."

The Kenyan regime has systematically gunned and teargassed protestors exercising their right to freedom of assembly and expression. Reports by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) show that police have killed 246 protestors from 2023 to mid-2025, including 118 in 2023 alone and 51 within five days of July protests against soaring costs of living. The 2024 Gen-Z protests against International Monetary Fund (IMF)-dictated austerity and tax hikes escalated, claiming 63 lives, injuring over 601, leading to 1,765 unlawful detentions, and 82 forced disappearances. By September 2025, additional unrest added 65 deaths and more than 500 injuries.

Alongside direct police repression, the Kenyan government regularly employs state-funded goons to break up demonstrations. They operate with open protection of the security forces and wield teargas canisters and equipment restricted to police units.

Over the past two years, millions of youth and workers have utilised platforms such as X, TikTok and WhatsApp to organise demonstrations and coordinate opposition to Ruto regime. These have enabled rapid mass mobilisation on a scale unprecedented in Kenya's six decades since independence.

Francis Atwoli, secretary-general of the Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU), which

nominally represents 1.5 million workers across 36 affiliated unions, has openly backed repression of social media users.

Last year, he issued a tirade defending social media censorship. He said, “Social media [users], it is time you stopped propaganda. You must love your country. If you are not patriotic, even investors will exit. Otherwise, we will plunge into chaos.” Atwoli has backed the clampdown on protests and called on the government to take “firm measures to curb the unrest.”

The figures who comprise Kenya’s bourgeois United Opposition offer no genuine alternative, despite their occasional targeting by Ruto’s police and goons. Kalonzo Musyoka was a leading government figure under the Western-backed repressive regime of Daniel arap Moi (1978 – 2002), which erected the police-state apparatus that tortured left-wing opponents and is now being deployed against workers and youth.

Martha Karua served as Minister of Justice in Mwai Kibaki’s government and publicly defended the administration during Kibaki’s 2007 election theft, which sparked post-election violence leaving more than 1,200 people dead and around half a million displaced. Security forces of Karua’s government were responsible for the majority of the killings.

Rigathi Gachagua, Ruto’s former deputy president and ally, occupied the second-highest position in the state while protesters were being shot in the streets during the Gen-Z protests.

The younger opposition figures being elevated by the capitalist class, Edwin Sifuna and MP Babu Owino, may attract thousands to their rallies, but they are no less rotten than their elders. Sifuna, as former ODM secretary general, remained in the party after it joined Ruto’s government. His pose of opposition was designed to vent popular anger without ever challenging the regime or his mentor, the political fixer Raila Odinga who orchestrated the “broad based” government with Ruto.

Owino is routinely promoted by the capitalist press as a symbol of youthful change. Yet he will forever be associated with a video recorded bloody incident in which he shot a DJ at close range as he played music, leaving the victim permanently paralysed. To this day, Owino has never faced imprisonment for his crime.

The working class must look elsewhere for alternatives, and urgently so, for the objective

conditions driving the class struggle in Kenya are about to sharply intensify.

The US-Israeli led imperialist war against Iran will have profound consequences for the Kenyan working class. The war in the Middle East is disrupting global energy markets and supply chains, driving up fuel prices worldwide. For oil-dependent Kenya, this will translate into higher transport and production costs, pushing up the price of food and other basic commodities.

This new wave of economic pain will arrive on the heels of the domestic repression, mountain of debt and a country under the boot of the IMF. As the cost of living becomes unbearable, the Ruto regime, will intensify its repression.

The defence of democratic rights and opposition to austerity in Kenya, and the struggle against war, are one and the same struggle against imperialism. This fight must be linked to the battle to defend workers’ living standards, oppose oligarchy, and fight for social equality. This perspective is the programme of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).



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