

Communist Party Marxist-Kenya leader Booker Omole released on bail, others arrested

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The Kenyan state has allowed Booker Ngesa Omole, General Secretary of the Communist Party Marxist–Kenya (CPM-K), to leave remand on punitive bail while maintaining the fabricated charges against him and escalating repression against the party and its supporters.

On February 23, Omole was violently abducted in Isiolo town by plainclothes police officers who produced no warrant and offered no identification. He was beaten severely, tortured and brutalised—his tooth was broken and his finger was cut with a penknife.

He was transported for hours and dumped at Mlolongo Police Station, a facility notorious for extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. Denied access to lawyers, family, or party members, Omole was later transferred to Kitengela Remand Prison with a bandaged hand, the court denying him both cash bail and urgent medical care.

The state assembled a case only after his detention. The absurd charges include attempting to kill police officers and connections to a Venezuelan “drug cartel”—fabricated because the CPM-K had organised protests in solidarity with the Bolivarian government against Washington’s imperialist intervention in January. These charges remain in force.

The demand for Omole’s release gained international backing. Tens of thousands of posts circulated on the social media platform X calling for his freedom. The campaign was amplified by users with tens of thousands, and in some cases hundreds of thousands, of followers, reflecting the broad outrage provoked by his abduction and concern over state repression in Kenya. The capitalist press has said nothing.

Under mounting public pressure, the Kenyan state allowed Omole to leave remand on bail, but it has

imposed crushing bail terms. Omole and his co-accused were granted bail on a consolidated bond of KES 1.4 million (\$10,800)—an amount deliberately set to bleed them. Omole himself was required to post KES 500,000 (\$3,850), with others forced to post KES 300,000 (\$2,300) and KES 100,000 (\$770) each.

In 2024 the average wage in the formal sector was approximately KES 77,758 (about \$600) per month. Average monthly salaries generally range from KES 30,000 (about \$230) to KES 150,000 (about \$1,150) for skilled professionals. For the millions of Kenyans in informal employment, survival on less than KES 20,000 per month (about \$150) is the norm. Omole’s KES 500,000 bond (about \$3,850) represents more than six months’ pay for the average formal sector worker and nearly two years’ income for many Kenyans.

Even as Omole was released on bail, the Ruto regime arrested three more CPM-K members. According to the CPM-K, Mulinge Muteti, Julius Kamau and Collins Otieno were arrested and detained at Central Police Station in Nairobi. They were arrested while submitting a petition against extrajudicial killings.

The abduction of Omole, the fabricated charges against him, the arrests of CPM-K members and of TikTok content creator Peter Maingi Kimani (known as Menelik Kimani) underscore the intensifying turn toward authoritarian methods by the “broad-based unity” government of President William Ruto—uniting the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) founded by the late political fixer Raila Odinga.

These measures are part of a broader effort by the Kenyan ruling class to suppress opposition amid mounting social tensions.

Immediately following Omole’s abduction, the

International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) denounced the attack and demanded his immediate and unconditional release, warning that the targeting of the leadership of the CPM-K signaled a broader assault on democratic rights in Kenya.

The ICFI has well-documented and irreconcilable political differences with this political tendency, which have been clearly presented in the WSWS. But it unequivocally opposed the brutal attack on Omole, demanded his immediate release, and called for an end to all state threats, abductions and repressive acts directed against the CPM-K.

The WSWS warned:

The defence of democratic rights cannot be entrusted to the courts, the opposition factions of the bourgeoisie, or the trade union bureaucracy. [...] Above all, the working class must build its own independent political movement, rooted in factories, neighbourhoods and schools, and guided by an international socialist perspective. This means breaking from all parties and trade union apparatuses tied to the capitalist ruling class and uniting with workers across Africa and internationally in the struggle against imperialist domination, austerity and state repression. Only through the conscious mobilisation of the working class for socialist transformation can democratic rights be secured and defended.

Subsequent events have confirmed this warning. Despite the international campaign demanding the release of Omole, the bourgeois opposition to Ruto said nothing, exposing its hostility to the defence of democratic rights. Figures presented as alternatives to the regime—including Kalonzo Musyoka, Martha Karua, Edwin Sifuna and Babu Owino—remained silent, while the trade union bureaucracy headed by Francis Atwoli, Secretary General of the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), has backed Ruto's state repression.

The defence of democratic rights cannot be entrusted to any faction of the Kenyan bourgeoisie or to the union apparatus tied to it, but requires the independent mobilisation of the working class.

The repression directed against the CPM-K is far from over, as demonstrated by the renewed arrests of its members. Omole himself remains under prosecution on

the same fabricated charges that were brought after his abduction.

The government of Ruto, like regimes across Africa, confronts mounting anger over austerity measures dictated by the IMF and soaring living costs. These pressures are set to intensify amid the global economic turmoil unleashed by the US–Israeli imperialist war on Iran. Engulfing the whole Middle East, the war underlines the speed with which world capitalism is descending into global war, dictatorship and outright criminality.

For the Kenyan and broader African bourgeoisie, tied by a thousand threads to global finance capital, the response to these crises is intensified repression. In Zambia, police arrested and charged Fred M'membe, President of the Socialist Party, following remarks he made during an appearance on the radio concerning the delayed burial of former President Edgar Lungu.

In South Africa, the government led by the African National Congress has deployed 450 troops into townships under the pretext of restoring order. In Tanzania, last year's elections were followed by mass killings and disappearances in a brutal post-election crackdown. In Uganda, the regime of Yoweri Museveni continues its systematic suppression of opposition forces.

The international solidarity campaign that helped force the Kenyan authorities to release Omole from remand on bail must be extended to the defence of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 26-year-old socialist and member of the ICFI imprisoned in Ukraine since April 2024 on fabricated charges of "state treason."

Syrotiuk founded the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, which opposed both the Russian invasion and the NATO-backed proxy war by fighting to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers. Facing a potential life sentence and now being denied urgently needed medical treatment, he is the target of political persecution aimed at criminalising socialist opposition to the war.

All organisations and individuals who support the campaign to free Omole should join the international struggle for Syrotiuk's freedom: demand the provision of immediate medical treatment, the dropping of all charges and his release, and sign and circulate the petition in his defence.



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