

Release activists arrested for protesting French imperialist – backed Africa Forward summit in Kenya!

Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International
14 May 2026

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) condemns the brutal repression carried out by Kenyan police against protesters opposing the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi. We demand the immediate release of the 12 who have been arrested.

The summit was held under the auspices of French imperialism led by President Emmanuel Macron and co-hosted by Kenyan President William Ruto.

On May 12, a small demonstration by the Pan-Africanism Summit Against Imperialism (PASAI) set out toward the statue of Dedan Kimathi, leader of the Mau Mau uprising against British imperialism in Nairobi's Central Business District. Police refused to allow protesters anywhere near the summit venue at Kenyatta International Convention Centre.

The PASAI counter-summit was convened by the Communist Party Marxist–Kenya (CPM-K) together with allied Stalinist, Pan-Africanist and Maoist organisations, including international delegations.

The demonstrators had reportedly agreed their revised route with the police and marched to demand the revocation of the recently approved Kenya-France security partnership, which permits the deployment of French military forces in Kenya and grants France access to the port of Mombasa, enabling Paris to project power across the Indian Ocean.

Kenya's ruling elite is set to benefit from a pledge by French shipping giant CMA CGM to invest \$823 million in modernizing the port of Mombasa, a key outlet for transporting billions of dollars' worth of minerals from Central and East Africa.

Barely 30 minutes after the demonstration began, police vehicles arrived and officers began tearing down the protesters' banners. As the march continued, police fired tear gas and flash-bang grenades at the demonstrators. After the assault subsided, police swarmed the area and seized protesters at gunpoint.

Those detained include Lee Sang-hun, former representative of the People's Democracy Party of South Korea, a Stalinist-nationalist organisation; Song Dan-bi, director of the party's International Department; Joti Brar, chair of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), a Maoist party;

Dimitris Patelis, a professor of philosophy at the Technical University of Crete and a founding member of Greece's Revolutionary Theory Group; and Guy Bremond, a French activist.

Also arrested were Kenyan activists Gacheke Gachihi, Sayialel Mankuyio, Juliaus Kamau, John Kamau, Brian Mwanzi, Derivk Opiyo, Fredrik Yara and Colins Otieno.

The day before, the Kenyan police had illegally arrested five students of the student front of the CPM-K, the Revolutionary Student Commission, for "unlawful assembly" in front of the summit: Beres Omondi, Tracy Auma, Patience Nyambura, Jobunga Samuel, and Kenneth Obiero. The students spent the night at Central Police Station in Nairobi and have not been released as of yet.

All Kenyans who were arrested have now been released, with the charges withdrawn after Ruto's Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions found no basis to prosecute. This exposes the arrests for what they were: an intimidation tactic. Meanwhile, the foreign delegates to the PASAI counter-summit remain in detention.

The ICFI has well-documented and irreconcilable political differences with the CPM-K, and political tendencies represented among sections of the arrested international delegates, which have been clearly elaborated on the World Socialist Web Site. But despite these differences, and in accordance with fundamental democratic and socialist political principles, the ICFI supports the CPM-K's demands:

- The immediate and unconditional release of all arrested individuals.
- An end to police harassment, abductions and repression against activists, organisers and progressive movements.
- The immediate halt to all imperialist military, political and economic agreements being imposed upon Kenya and Africa.
- Respect for the democratic rights of all participants attending anti-imperialist and Pan-African gatherings.

The arrests are part of a systematic clampdown by the "broad-based unity" Kenya government of Ruto, which unites his United Democratic Alliance (UDA) with the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). This repression is directed

against all left-wing opposition, including the Communist Party Marxist–Kenya (CPM-K), but its fundamental target is the Kenyan working class and youth.

The Ruto government has repeatedly targeted CPM-K leaders and members. Booker Ngesa Omole, the party’s general secretary, was violently abducted in February and later brought before the courts on fraudulent charges. He had survived an assassination attempt the previous year. Omole remains on bail. The party’s national chairperson, Mwaivu Kaluka, was also nearly abducted in Mombasa by plain-clothes police officers, months before.

This repression is inseparable from the escalating violence of the Ruto regime since it came to power in 2022, as it seeks to erect a dictatorship modelled on that of Ruto’s political mentor, the Western-backed autocrat Daniel arap Moi, who ruled Kenya from 1978 to 2002.

Since Ruto took office, police and security forces have killed at least 246 protesters, including during the 2023 protests against the soaring cost of living, the 2024 Gen-Z protests against Ruto’s IMF-backed Finance Bill, and those last year against police repression and the regime’s renewed attacks. Hundreds more have been injured, maimed, disappeared or abducted.

The regime has banned demonstrations, deployed military-style checkpoints across Nairobi, shut down internet access and media coverage during protests, created intelligence units tasked with abductions and torture, and, in an unprecedented escalation, deployed the military against unarmed protesters.

Now Ruto is preparing a new austerity offensive contained in the Finance Bill 2026, including a 25 percent excise duty on mobile phones, VAT on digital and platform-based financial services, higher taxation on second-hand clothes, an increase in monthly rental income tax from 7.5 percent to 10 percent, and tighter tax-compliance rules that will strengthen the Kenya Revenue Authority against small businesses and informal workers.

These measures will raise the cost of communication, mobile money, rent, cheap clothing and everyday commerce—basic necessities for millions. It will intersect with soaring fuel and food prices intensified by the US-Israeli imperialist war against Iran, which has produced major oil supply shocks and sharp fuel-price increases in Kenya.

Ruto has also intensified Kenya’s role as an imperialist proxy. His government secured Washington’s designation of Kenya as a major non-NATO ally, backed Israel’s genocide in Gaza, and condemned Iran’s retaliatory missile strikes. Among broad layers of workers and youth, he is seen as a direct accomplice of the imperialist war machine—groveling before Washington, London, Brussels and now Paris, while transforming Kenya into a platform for military, financial and diplomatic operations against the oppressed masses of Africa and the world.

Moreover, Ruto’s repression was undoubtedly coordinated in

advance with Macron, whose own government has carried out savage repression inside France and in French-controlled territories. During the mass struggle against Macron’s pension cuts, French police violently attacked demonstrations and strikes, while the notorious BRAV-M motorised police units were deployed to intimidate, assault and arrest protesters.

The same repressive apparatus was later mobilised against banned pro-Gaza demonstrations in Paris. In New Caledonia, Macron the government imposed a state of emergency against the Kanak people, censoring TikTok and pledging to “retake” areas with armored vehicles and helicopters, resulting in the killing of 19 Kanaks by French special forces.

In West Africa, even after French troops were driven out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, Paris continues to defend its influence through the CFA franc, French banks and corporations, debt mechanisms, diplomatic pressure and the use of Islamist forces and Tuareg movements against the pro-Russian military juntas, the latest example of which was last month’s coordinated offensive against the military regime in Mali.

In France, Macron deploys the police against workers, students, anti-genocide protesters and immigrants in opposition to war and austerity; in Kenya, Ruto’s police act as the local enforcers of the same imperialist strategy, suppressing opposition to the transformation of the country into a platform for French, European and US military operations.

The fight against repression in Kenya cannot be separated from the fight against Macron, European militarism and imperialist war. It requires the unity of workers in the imperialist centers with workers and youth in the former colonies, in a common international movement against war, dictatorship and capitalist exploitation, based on a socialist program.



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