

Kenya, Towards a Full Blown Civil Conflict?

President Kenyatta Sworn in for Second Term, Opposition Pledges to Establish “Alternative Government”

Kenya faces challenges as opposition coalition threatens to establish parallel regime

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Featured image: Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta with First Lady Margaret at Swearing In on November 28, 2017

A rerun of the national presidential elections in the East African state of Kenya has resulted in a landslide victory by the incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta of the Jubilee Party.

Kenyatta stood for election again after an early September 4-2 Supreme Court ruling which overturned the initial August 8 election mandating that another poll be held within 60 days.

Opposition coalition leader and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga of the National Super Alliance (NASA) boycotted the October 26 poll saying that inadequate reforms had been instituted within the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IBEC). Frequent clashes between NASA supporters and security forces escalated leading up to the second election.

The IBEC had certified the second election on October 30 where Kenyatta won with 98.3 percent of the votes cast. Only 38.4 percent of the electorate turned out on October 26 less than one half of the participation garnered on August 8.

However, the same Supreme Court in which a majority nullified the presidential vote less than two months before, upheld the October 26 election unanimously leading to the inauguration of President Kenyatta on November 28. The court said that two petitions seeking to once again quash the results were thrown out due to a lack of merit.

An article in the Voice of America (VOA) said of the election challenges that:

“The two petitions were filed by a former lawmaker, Harun Mwau, and two human rights defenders, Njonjo Mue and Khalef Khalifa. The petitioners argued the electoral commission committed illegalities by going ahead with the election in spite of opposition leader Raila Odinga pulling out of the race. Benjamin Musyoki, who represents Mwau, argues the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission was supposed to carry out a new nomination process after the annulment of the original August 8 poll.” (Nov. 16)

Kenyatta along with Deputy President William Ruto were sworn in by the Chief Registrar of the Judiciary Anne Amadi. The ceremony was presided over by Chief Justice David Maraga.

Over 60,000 people attended the event held at the Moi International Sports Center in Kasarani amid cheers from the crowd. Numerous heads-of-state and other officials from throughout Africa were in attendance including Presidents Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Edgar Lungu (Zambia), Ian Khama (Botswana), Salva Kiir Mayardit (South Sudan), Ismaïl Omar Guelleh Muhammed (Djibouti), Ali Bongo Ondimba (Gabon), Hage Geingob (Namibia), Abdullahi Farmajo (Somalia), Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and Guinea's Prime Minister Mamady Youla.

President Muhammadu Buhari of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was represented at the ceremony by his Vice President Yemi Osinbajo. Former President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete and ex-Prime Minister Edward Lowassa were on hand for the inauguration.



Kenya crowds at Kenyatta inauguration on November 28, 2017

The president expressed his hopes for a united Kenya during the inaugural address, saying:

"I undertake today to be the custodian of the dreams of all Kenyans and to be the keeper of the aspirations of those who voted for me and those who did not. I will be president of all. I will devote my time and energy to build bridges to unite and bring prosperity to all Kenyans."

Opposition Coalition Pledges to Establish Alternative Government

Meanwhile just several blocks away from the inauguration, supporters of the NASA coalition clashed with police in protest against the second term of Kenyatta. A rally against police brutality in honor of those killed in ongoing unrest was scheduled to take place at Jacaranda grounds in Embakasi East, Nairobi.

A number of people were reportedly killed on November 17 amid the return of Odinga from

a ten day visit to the United States. Odinga is seeking assistance from various western states in his bid to destabilize the administration of President Kenyatta.

While in the U.S., Odinga met with top officials at the State Department, leading Senators and members of the House of Representatives which are all dominated by the Republican Party under President Donald Trump. After returning to Kenya he reported that the visit was a success in relationship to his strategy of “resistance” against the current Kenyan government.

Riot police sealed off the area around the Jacaranda grounds on November 28 to prevent a rally at the location prompting responses from NASA supporters. Youth set fire to tires and threw stones at police after they were prevented from marching to the location of the rally.

Although by early morning on November 29 the situation appeared to be calm, the impact of the violence was very much in evidence among residents and small business people of Tena Estate along Manyanja Road. The smell of teargas and broken windows continued to unsettle those who live and shop in the neighborhood.

Eyewitness accounts of the unrest on November 28 were published in the one of the leading newspapers, the Kenya Daily Nation. According to Dorothy Akoth:

“When teargas was thrown at us while Mr. Odinga was speaking, we dispersed but some men were still determined to fight with the policemen. We entered our houses and some people went into business premises located by the roadside. A teargas canister was thrown into the backdoor of my house. And all the gas spread into my house. All my children have been sneezing since yesterday and they have running noses.”

Another businesswoman, Aucillia Okoth, conveyed that:

“I had run to hide in that kiosk because some youths who had raided my shop were looting and they had threatened to even rape me if I did not get out. But when I was hiding, I heard gunshots and then suddenly the whole kiosk was full of people. The police came later and forced us out.”

Moreover, Odinga and his supporters are threatening to declare a parallel state in defiance of the Kenyatta administration. Odinga will be sworn in for this alternative government on December 12 which could potentially continue the already tense situation inside the country.

“I will be sworn in as President of Kenya on Jamhuri Day (December 12) through the people’s assembly, and go to State House. We will meet to discuss the matter and direct on the way forward,” Odinga stressed. “You know me very well, I am not a coward. We are not going to be inaugurated in the same way Kizza Besigye was sworn-in in Uganda. We will be sworn in the same way that Zimbabwe’s President Emmerson Mnangagwa was sworn in,” he maintains.

Nonetheless, Odinga’s move of being sworn-in is tantamount to a treasonable offense under Chapter 63 of the Constitution of Kenya. Such a move would be viewed as an attempt to

usurp the authority of President Kenyatta.

Role in East African Politics and Regional Economy

Kenya is the largest economy in the East Africa region which has experienced growth rates close to six percent in recent years. However, the [World Bank](#) is predicting a slump of 0.5 percent in growth for 2017 due to the persistence of drought which will impact agricultural production.

An inflation rate of 10.3 percent earlier in the year has placed a strain on consumer spending capacity. Other problems related to a lack of loans for small businesses, consumer credit and housing will continue to hamper genuine development.

It is estimated that the country is in need of at least two million new affordable housing units in light of the horrendous overcrowding in Nairobi and other municipalities where people remain in sub-standard dwellings that pose health and environmental dangers. Such social conditions serve as a breeding ground for opposition forces in their attempt to delegitimize the Kenyatta government.

Consequently, the threat by Odinga and his NASA coalition to move forward with disruptive tactics does not bode well for economic and political stability. Kenyatta has reached out to Odinga in an effort to stave off additional unrest.

The eruption of a full-blown civil conflict will only provide an opening for the imperialist states to intervene both politically and militarily. The East Africa region is one of the world's wealthiest in regard to energy resources and strategic waterways where events in Kenya and neighboring states will be critical in regard to the general well-being of the people of Africa as a whole.

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