

CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

AUGUST 16, 2022

Conflict Evolution

Search for Common Ground (Search) in collaboration with the Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Tana River Peace, Reconciliation and Development (TRPRD) and Ijara Women for Peace has established an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system through embedded community observation and social media listening, with the aim to harness the shared information between communities, civil society organisations, and government authorities to identify and address imminent threats to peaceful elections, particularly looking at conflict trends, drivers and locations that could potentially trigger or experience violence. Social media listening monitors online conversations, with a focus on Facebook and TikTok, to track hate speech and misinformation trends and how these could potentially affect conflicts offline.

Kenya's general elections on August 9 were hailed as the most peaceful and transparent in the country's history¹ following the publications of raw polling data publicly available for everyone to tally. While the political atmosphere in the coastal region and Garissa County appeared to be generally "peaceful", claims of vote rigging where election officials were found with ballot papers and illegal ballot boxes were reported in Lamu and Kwale counties, while in Garissa County, the Dadaab tallying centre was attacked by unknown persons armed with knives and pangas allegedly hired by political aspirants to disrupt the voting exercise.

An uneasy calm was witnessed ahead of the presidential results announcement *on August 15* as people deserted towns and business centres remained closed across the counties in anticipation of a turbulent outcome after the declaration of presidential results. The announcement of the presidential election results was marred by **chaotic scenes and scuffles** at the national tallying centre resulting in injuries amidst a divided electoral commission and allegations of non-transparency fuelling fears of violence resulting from disputed polls. The dispute among the IEBC commissioners further damages the reputation of the electoral commission, casting **doubts on the credibility** of the election results.

"We have made sure that we have improved the standards and we say as a fact as commissioners we have done a good job [...].But some things need to be put out there as you can see the four of us are here and not at Bomas where the results are going to be announced because of the opaque nature of how this phase has been handled. We, therefore, cannot take ownership of this result that is going to be announced." - Vice chair IEBC, Mrs. Juliana Cherera

Further allegations of **harassment, arrests, threats, intimidation and disappearance of key electoral officers**² were reported by the commission chair before results declaration, with one officer reported

¹ The Commonwealth Observer Group, [Kenya elections largely peaceful and transparent](#), 11th August 2022

² The Citizen Digital, [Chebukati Says IEBC Officials Faced Arrests, Threats, Kidnappings Before Results Declaration](#), 15th August 2022

missing and later on found dead with visible signs of struggle and torture³, exhibiting efforts to **manipulate the election**.

The general context after the announcement of Kenya's Deputy President, Hon. William Ruto as President Elect was **celebratory/jubilations processions** in most of the coastal counties, particularly in Lamu and Tana River counties. However, in Mombasa County our embedded observers reported occurrences of violence, including **armed gang robberies (2)** and **violent protests (1)**.

Armed gang robberies were reported in Guraya, in Majengo and Likoni areas, Mombasa County, where criminal gangs armed with machetes took advantage of the tense atmosphere following the presidential announcement to wreak havoc by robbing passersby and shops. In addition to this, **violent protests** were equally reported in pockets of Mombasa County, being a stronghold affiliated to the Azimio la Umoja coalition, particularly in Bangladesh area, resulting from the loss of the coalition candidate Hon. Raila Odinga.

Mombasa's police officers responded to all of these incidents by dispersing the protests and armed gangs with tear gas, which brought back calm for the better part of the night. However, this calm is perceived by many as temporary, and might be disturbed by the next actions undertaken by the losing coalition.

As majority of the Hon. Raila Odinga staunch supporters have been expressing disappointment and anger with the presidential election results, Kenyans tensely await whether he will head to the Supreme Court, as his running mate Martha Karua announced on Twitter on August 15: "It is not over till it is over." Allegations of manipulated elections could potentially trigger violence in opposition strongholds as the supporters urge Hon. Raila to reject the election results.

At this stage, independent election monitoring missions will have an important role to play. The Elections Observation Group (ELOG) has come out saying that its projections tally with the Kenyan electoral commission (IEBC) results for the presidency.⁴ Other international observation missions like the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) and the African Union-COMESA election observers, the EAC Election Observation Mission, as well as the media and social media, CSOs, religious leaders, political leaders and the justice actors are key to mitigating the imminent conflict resulting from the disputed polls.

Further community engagement is also necessary, particularly in Bangladesh, Likoni and Majengo areas of Mombasa County that have repeatedly reported armed conflicts and clashes between communities and law enforcement officers, to collaboratively tackle election conflict drivers ahead of the gubernatorial elections that are yet to take place in the county.



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³ The Star, [Missing IEBC official found dead in oloitoktok Kajjado](#), 16th August 2022

⁴ Al Jazeera, [Kenyan observer group says its projections tally with official results](#), 16th August 2022