

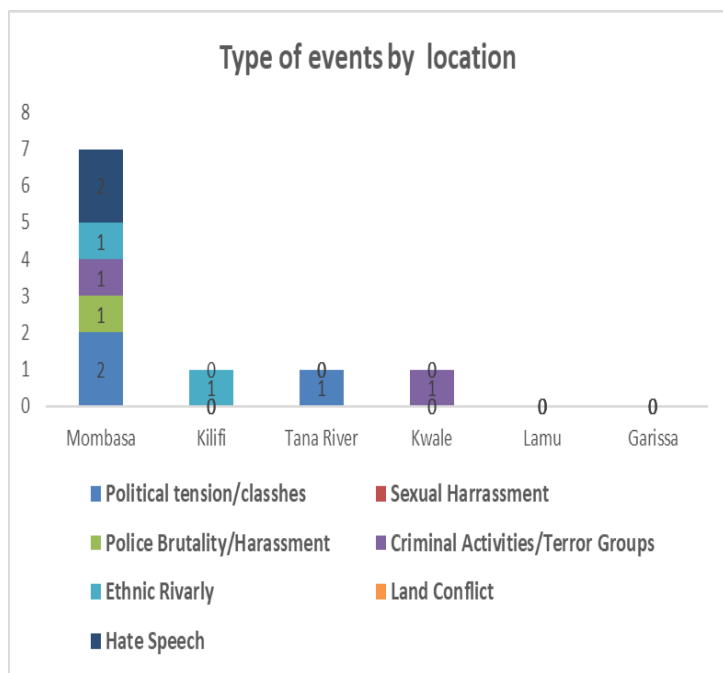
CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

AUGUST 9, 2022

Conflict Evolution

In the run up to the general election, Kenya is faced with camouflaged ethnic and regional alignments to propel political leaders to power, resulting in a highly competitive and polarised pre-election phase. While the political atmosphere in the coastal region and Garissa county appears to be one of “near normalcy”, undercurrents of impending tensions are threatening peaceful elections.

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 intelligence 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.



Between August 8-9, 2022, the following events were recorded, disaggregated by categories and specific locations. A total of 10 events have been reported as of noon on August 9.

During this observation period, the most reported events were around hate speech (2) and political tensions (3) reported in Mombasa and Tana river, criminal activities and the emergence of terror groups (2) reported in Mombasa and Kwale. Online hate speech was reported on social media in Mombasa particularly regarding the postponement of the gubernatorial election. One (1) case of police brutality/harassment was reported in Mombasa. Specifically:

Political tensions were reported at **Alidina Visra tally centre** in Mombasa County, as agents of political candidates clashes with the IEBC¹ officials over the delivery of election materials. Tension was also

¹ IEBC-Independent election board in charge of elections in the republic of Kenya .

observed in Mombasa County after a mix-up of ballot papers from Kilifi. This led the IEBC to postpone the Mombasa gubernatorial election until a future date to be communicated by the commission. The political parties perceived to enjoy a support base in Mombasa fear this postponement could affect the voter turnout in the region, with some members of the national and county assemblies claiming this decision could be a strategy by their opponents through the IEBC to rig the elections. Further incidents of confrontations were reported at **Tudor** village in Mombasa, involving the Member of Parliament and County assembly aspirants leading to closure of the polling station for some hours. The two aspirants were arrested and held at Makupa Police station. Additional analysis from the social media flagged the following reactions on the voter mix-up issues and postponement of the Mombasa gubernatorial elections.

“Kilifi ballots have been found in mombasa, so they cancel gubernatorial voting in msa [Mombasa ndlr] instead of kilifi. Open your eyes people he cannot handle both msa na kilifi at the same time. Kule kavamiwa na sonko na huku kuna kingi [In English: It was attacked by cockroaches and there are a lot of them here]. So he needs ample time to deal with one county at a time. Open yours eyes.”

- Anonymous social media user

Police harassment was reported in **Majengo** in Mombasa County. Police officers were deployed to control any insecurity incidents in the hotspot areas of **Mvita, Majengo and Kisauni** in Mombasa. Reports from the embedded observers indicated some level of bullying and brutalization of innocent residents in Majengo by the security apparatus. This was witnessed through a video shared online and circulating via whatsapp groups, where a security officer was seen beating innocent citizens.

Criminal activities/Terror Groups. A day to the elections, two suspected members of the MRC² were arrested in **Kwale** county. The suspects are associated with the local structure of **Maperani** village unit community policing. While in Mombasa County, in **Likoni** specifically, there was tension between residents and armed youth suspected to have been hired by politicians to cause chaos and fear, hence influencing low voting turnout in Likoni constituency.

Hate speech and Tribalism is still manifesting on social media during this reporting period. Social media analysis flagged the following reactions from a post made by a social media user:

Post 1 - *“I was for Mike sonko but since hayuko debeni, Kura yangu Nampa kingi. Mijikenda amkeni mchukue county yenu kutoka kwa mikono ya Wala urojo..... MIJIKENDA AMKENI”*

- Anonymous social media user

(in English: I was to vote for Mike Sonko but since he is no longer in the race, I will give my vote to Kingi. Wake up Mijikenda and take your county from the hands of people who take soup. WAKE UP MIJIKENDA)

Post 2- *“Interestingly, IEBC had included Mike Sonko as a Candidate for Mombasa gubernatorial seat even after revoking the Certificate it had issued to him...!!!”* - Anonymous social media user

² MRC-Mombasa Republican Council.-a separatist organisation advocating for the independence of Mombasa Republican

Comments

- *“Wewe huwa mtu mjinga sana....the mistake was that majina ya aspirants walikuwa wa kilifi county...umbwa.”* (In English: *You are a very stupid person, the mistake was that the name of the aspirants were for Kilifi County...you dog*)
- *Wacha umama/utoto kama iebc imefutulia mbali wewe ninani* (In English: *Stop childish*)
- *Kipii ni kipi tu* (In English: *A fool is a fool*)
- *A very big nincompoop suffering from brain schizoprenia*
- *You are one very lazy ill informed blogger. The ballot papers had already been printed bfo Sonko's revocation!!!*
- *The confusion in kambaland is because we've never tested power and the 3Ks.That's we will never have one voice.*
- *I smell a rat, chebuchietha³ is hiding something.*

Others concerns noted by our embedded observers included:

- Delays in delivery of election materials reported at polling stations in some parts of Mombasa (**Mvita**), Kilifi (**Mtangani pema**).
- Faults of the IEBC KIEM Kits. Some voters could not find their details while some kits were totally not operational as reported in **Kilifi, Tana River (Garsen) and Mombasa** counties. These faults have made the IEBC officials resort to manual registration of voters, something that was contested by the court and made the process longer (10-15 minutes per voter) hence causing long queues at polling stations.
- Low voter turnout in **Jamvi la wageni-Likoni** and **Mwakigwena Mwakigwena** in Mombasa County, which could be attributed to a lack of incentives to vote, a threat of violence and/or bad weather in areas like **Kongowea**.
- Lack of voter streams for the elderly (60+years), expectant women and PLWDs in Kwale, Lungalunga sub-county.
- Voter bribery in **Shella ward, Malindi**. Voters are asked to take photos of the ballot papers as a proof to show whether they voted for the political candidates.
- In Lamu county some youth are suspected to have been paid to cause chaos in the polling station at **Lamu social hall**.



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³ Hate term for Chebukati, the IEBC Chairman - it's a combination of Chebukati and Chietha (meaning Shit).