

# CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

AUGUST 25, 2022

## Conflict Evolution

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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 political stability hangs in limbo as the tightly contested presidential elections results which declared Kenya's Vice president William Ruto as the president elect have been disputed. Presidential contender, Hon. Raila Odinga has filed a petition in court stating that Kenya has no legally and validly declared winner nor a President-Elect and warned of a grave legal and political crisis facing Kenya's democracy<sup>1</sup>. The disputed presidential election results have since attracted eight<sup>2</sup> other petitions at the supreme court **seeking to nullify the elections and a fresh election conducted.**<sup>3</sup>

The outgoing President's silence over his deputy's win has further displeased adherents of Kenya Kwanza Alliance with the deputy president elect Hon. Rigathi Gachagua asserting that the swearing-in ceremony **should take place with or without President Kenyatta.**

The gubernatorial elections in Mombasa county that was initially set for 23rd August has been postponed for a second time over claims of **intimidation and harassment of election officials** resulting in community **displeasure and suspicion** with three Mombasa residents suing the IEBC chairman, the Ministry of Interior, and the Attorney General while at the same time leading to a **stalemate** as the current newly elected members of the county assembly can not be sworn in with the governor's position vacant.

Between 17th and 24th August 2022, the general context across the coastal counties and Garissa county was calm. However, the following 10 events were recorded by our online and community embedded observers: **Online incitement and name calling** (3), **vote rigging** (1), **clashes** (1), **Political tension** (3), **criminal gangs** supported by losing political candidates (1).and a **violent attack** on an elected leader (1).

Three incidents of **online incitement and name calling** have been reported in **Tana River, Lamu and Mombasa counties**. In Lamu county, online polarisation along ethnic lines on facebook and whatsapp were reported, brought by **political wins by aspirants perceived as not being native to the area**, catalysing the local vs migrant dividing line in a county still recovering from the 2014 Mpeketoni

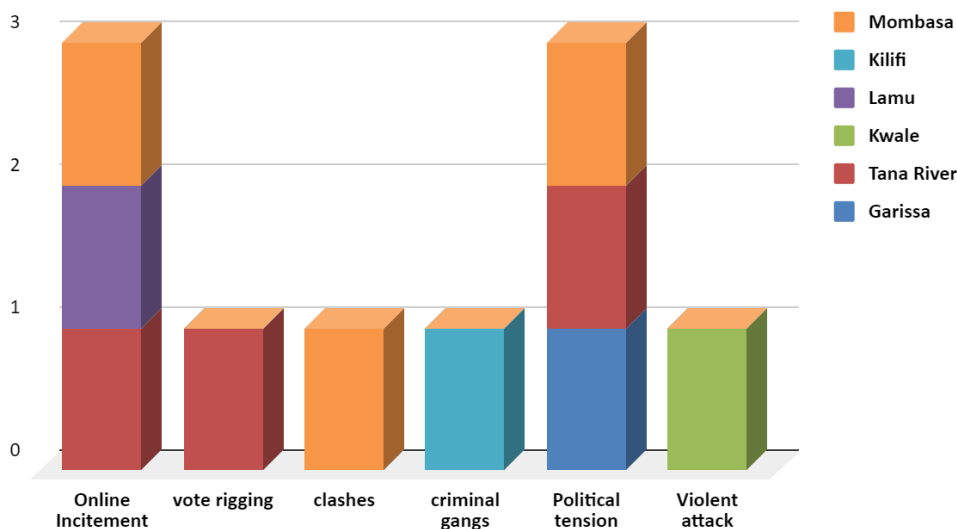
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<sup>1</sup> [Statement on Elections held on 9th August 2022](#), 16th August 2022

<sup>2</sup> Apart from R. Odinga, other petitioners include John Njoroge Kamau, Daniel Kariuki Ngari, Juliah Nyokabi, Khalef Khalifa, Okiya Omtatah, Youth Advocacy Africa and Reuben Kigame.

<sup>3</sup> Capital News, [9 Presidential petitions to overturn President Elect Ruto's-victory](#), 22nd August 2022

**Type of Event by Location**



massacre where one ethnic group was targeted.

In Tana River county social media space, distorted videos and name calling of the elected governor as well as arguments by rival political supporters have taken centre stage stirred by dissatisfaction with the outcome of the elections. As Mombasa county prepares for the gubernatorial elections slated for 29th August 2022, **body shaming and bullying** of political

aspirants and insults have dominated the Mombasa online platforms as the two main candidates for the gubernatorial race tear each other down and ask their supporters to “Linda kura” (protect votes) after elections with both factions claiming there are plans to rig the elections resulting in **political tension** in the county. Further to this, **clashes** during political rallies in the county have further been reported as supporters and campaigners fight for tokens (money).

**Political tension** has further been reported in **Bura** location, Tana River county, brought about by the **discovery of a hidden ballot box with untallied votes** three days after the present gubernatorial incumbent was declared winner in a neck and neck race where he won by 349 votes casting doubt on the credibility of the announced results. The former Governor in the county, who came in second in the race, has since filed a petition challenging the win. In Garissa county, tension now looms as negotiated democracy used by clans and clan elders to select preferred political candidates did not transcribe the outcomes of the IEBC elections.

In Kwale county, an elected Member of County Assembly and his wife were **violently attacked** with armed youths in a ploy suspected to be plotted by the defeated MCA aspirant claiming the incumbent imported voters from Tanzania resulting in his win.

In Kilifi county, Malindi Shella ward, reports of **formation of criminal gangs**, locally known as team ‘zaragoza’, team ‘catalunya’ and team ‘vishepe’, imposing territorial boundaries where one team is not allowed to cross to the other’s boundaries in the same village have surfaced. These gangs are purported to be supported by MCAs who lost their bid in the elections creating tension in the area.

Security officers have since been swift to respond to community threats, with heavy deployment of forces reported across counties to restore order. Religious leaders in the country have taken the forefront in talks with the presidential candidates in an attempt to promote peace and cohesion. Further to this, outgoing President Kenyatta has pledged a smooth transition of power. At this point, the contested presidential

elections verdict and ensuing political stability lies with the Judiciary's ability to make impartial adjudication.

Based on the trends observed, a **social media campaign** dedicated to countering **online dangerous speech**, particularly in Mombasa county is necessary to de-escalate tensions. Further to this, while heavy deployment of security officers in communities has profoundly maintained calm and order, there is need to **intensify grassroots online hate speech monitoring, investigations and prosecution** through facilitating and collaboration of local online monitors and department of criminal investigations in order to deter online violence.



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