

Protesters Clash With Police in Kenya and Loot Train

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Karel Prinsloo/Associated Press

Opposition supporters taunted police during rioting Thursday in Nairobi, Kenya.

NAIROBI, [Kenya](#) — Law and order seem to be steadily deteriorating in some parts of Kenya, like the Kibera slum here in Nairobi, where on Thursday protesters hijacked and looted a freight train bound for Uganda.

Police officers responded by storming the area, and witnesses said officers shot several unarmed civilians.

Residents of Kibera said they had blocked the train tracks, which snake between rows of iron shanties, because nearly three weeks of postelection turbulence had left them with closed stores and dwindling supplies.

“The people are scared,” said Joseph Owira, a barber in Kibera. “There is no food.”

On the second day of a new round of nationwide protests, the situation in Kenya seemed as gloomy as ever, with opposition supporters fighting the police in several cities and Kenya’s political leaders still miles apart. The opposition is protesting the Dec. 27 election, in which

President [Mwai Kibaki](#) was declared the winner of a new term by a wafer-thin margin over [Raila Odinga](#), the top opposition leader, who says the election was rigged.

On Thursday, Mr. Odinga held a news conference deploring the tactics used by the police to break up demonstrations, which the government has deemed illegal. Mr. Odinga had called on supporters to hold protests on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week. “Police are executing innocent citizens at will while the world watches and talks about dialogue,” Mr. Odinga said. “How do you dialogue with killers?”

Police officials said the only people harmed had been hooligans bent on robbing and looting.

“The Kenyan police are acting strictly within the laws of this country and with a lot of extra restraint,” said Eric Kiraithe, a police spokesman.

The Kenyan authorities appear to be steadily ratcheting up the pressure. On Thursday, officers in Kisumu, in western Kenya, briefly detained several journalists who were taking pictures of street clashes.

The day before, a Kenyan television crew filmed a police officer in Kisumu shooting an unarmed demonstrator who was making faces at security agents. The demonstrator died, and after the disturbing scene was shown, many opposition supporters vowed to take revenge.

More than 600 people have been killed in the mayhem since the election. Much of the violence has been ethnically driven, with groups who support the opposition venting their frustrations at the president’s ethnic group, the Kikuyu, and at the Kamba, who tend to support Kenya’s vice president, Kalonzo Musyoka. On Thursday night, men with machetes attacked several Kamba residents of Kibera.

As the crisis grinds on, countries that provide aid to Kenya are becoming increasingly critical. On Thursday, the [European Parliament](#) threatened to freeze aid to Kenya’s government if a political solution was not found.

But Alfred Mutua, a Kenyan government spokesman, brushed this aside.

“The government of Kenya will not be blackmailed,” he said. “We are able to support ourselves.”

It is difficult to tell if the protests will fade out because of fatigue — many Kenyans have said they simply want to go back to work — or intensify. The number of protesters seems to be decreasing, but those engaged seem more determined. Slings to hurl rocks are now a common sight in Nairobi's slums. So are phalanxes of police officers crouching behind plastic shields and firing guns.

Kennedy Abwao contributed reporting from Nairobi.

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