

# Ethnic Fault Lines Emerge in Kenya's Post-Election Turmoil

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NAIROBI, Dec. 31 -- With the death toll from post-election violence surpassing 100 and riots continuing in many parts of Kenya, an uncomfortable tension settled Monday over a struggling, melting-pot settlement called Kangeme, a densely populated sprawl of corrugated steel shacks.

A day after President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of a second term, people who have lived as neighbors for decades in the Nairobi enclave began speaking of two Kenyas, one for the Kikuyu, Kibaki's tribe, and one for Luos and other ethnic groups loyal to opposition leader Raila Odinga, who says the vote was rigged.

Along Kangeme's bustling, muddy streets, a question lingered: whether Kenya, long an island of relative calm in volatile East Africa, would erupt into all-out ethnic war or hobble along on the strength of ties formed in places like this, where Kikuyus, Luos and members of other ethnic groups have shopped at one another's markets, lent one another money and even intermarried.

In the setting sun of New Year's Eve, Evans Njue, 34, answered with his feet.

"We have been living together like gentlemen," he said, towing a cart heaped high with his belongings toward a waiting truck on the edge of Kangeme. "But leaders are making us fight here. I'm afraid of walking around. I want to go home." By that he meant his ethnic home town of Meru, 300 miles northeast of Nairobi.

The violence followed elections initially praised as a model of democratic engagement, but which quickly led to chaos Sunday as the opposition charged rigging.

At the same time, there was a prevailing sense among Odinga's supporters that his time -- and by extension, their own -- had come. Odinga had been leading by a large margin that vanished on Sunday as returns poured in for Kibaki in tallies that international observers have called into question.

"They got power at independence and now they don't want to relinquish it," said Martin Makokha, 30, a grocery clerk who is not Kikuyu, but said he voted for Kibaki in 2002 with high hopes. "We feel the Kikuyu have betrayed us. Very much."

The idea of two Kenyas is not just metaphorical. Throughout Sunday and Monday, a crude sorting process appeared to be underway here and in many other parts of the country.

A man walking to his job as a security guard in Nairobi said that he was stopped by roaming Kikuyu gangs at no fewer than five checkpoints along the way. Fearing for his life, he was told to show his national identity card. He is from the Kisii ethnic group, which divided its vote between Kibaki and Odinga.

In another neighborhood Monday, Cecilia Wanjira, a Kikuyu, sat in the smoldering ruins of a small market situated on land her family owned.

"They were saying the plot belongs to a Kikuyu," she said, recalling the rioting mob that attacked the place on Sunday night. "They were Luos. And they were saying we cannot stay. They were saying they are going for revenge."

Similar reports poured in from across the country. As the New Year approached, people slept at friends' houses, at police stations and behind locked doors, fearing the worst.

In Washington, the State Department issued a warning, saying that "U.S. citizens should strongly consider the risks of travel to Kenya," describing conditions as "volatile and subject to change."

Kenyan security forces cracked down severely on protesters Monday under cover of a media blackout imposed by Kibaki's government, which had been praised for allowing an unprecedented degree of press freedom. Helicopters hovered over volatile areas of Nairobi where police have kept rioters, protesters and residents alike hemmed in with clubbings, bullets and tear gas. Many people there are running out of food and water.

"There is no movement here," said Lennox Ongaya, 30, an Odinga supporter who has grown angrier by the day at the police surrounding his community. "Let them kill us now rather than us dying slowly over the next five years," he said, referring to Kibaki's term.

The situation could explode or find release on Thursday, when Odinga, a master organizer, has called for a "million-person march" in downtown Nairobi.

A rally that was to have taken place Monday was canceled after police threatened arrests and turned downtown Nairobi into a no-go zone of green uniforms, riot shields and assault weapons.

Odinga's aides hope that the Thursday rally "can help let the steam out," said Salim Lone, a spokesman. "It could go the other way, too, but Odinga has been clear about wanting peaceful and democratic action."

In the late afternoon, Kangeme's streets were packed and restless with people who weren't shopping, since shops were shut, or working, because Kibaki had declared Monday a national holiday. Rather, they seemed more to be simmering, as relationships among neighbors frayed.

Martin Makokha, who belongs to the Luhya ethnic group and supports Odinga, said he had just come from a walk with an old friend, a Kikuyu.

"He's pretending everything is normal," Makokha said, referring to his friend. "Even right now, I'm so bitter. He's saying, 'Since the election is over, let's still remain friends.' "

He looked down, seeming to wonder whether that was possible. Then, with some effort, he said: "I don't blame him. I blame the election officials. Why should we fight?"

Others were less magnanimous. They said that Kikuyus, who own and rent out most of the houses in Kangeme, had suddenly raised rents or asked non-Kikuyu tenants to move out.

"They started to tell us yesterday!" said Newton Kwemba, an Odinga supporter. "They told me to go back to Kakamega," his upcountry home, he said. "They said I should leave. But I will die rather than leave. If I die, okay."

Not too far away, in front of the smoking ruins of a vegetable and fruit market, friends Agnes Moraa, an Odinga supporter, and Mary Wanjiro, a Kibaki supporter, were sitting together on a wooden bench.

Their kiosks had been burned down during the night, and now they were selling their mangoes and pineapples out of a cardboard box.

"The Luos burned the market down because they said it was owned by Kikuyus," said Moraa.

Asked whether the rioting had altered their relationship, Wanjiro put her arm around her friend, with whom she has sold vegetables and swapped stories for three years.

"Not us," she said. "But others, yes. And it's going to be that way. There is a lot of fear."

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