

Kenyan Riot Police Turn Back Rallying Protesters

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NAIROBI, [Kenya](#) — Nairobi degenerated deeper into violence on Thursday as riot police used tear gas, batons and water cannons to turn back thousands of opposition supporters who tried to rally in the Kenyan capital.

Protesters burned tires, smashed store windows and fought with the police across the city.

Some demonstrators showed restraint, yelling to the rowdier members in their ranks, “Weka mawe! Weka mawe!” which means, “Put down the stones.”

Other protesters torched businesses as police officers in padded suits chased them away from the downtown area.

“We will burn this country down!” screamed Abdullah Mohammed, a young protester. He promptly set fire to a mountain of tires.

One band of opposition supporters tore through a Nairobi slum, attacking residents and raping several women, residents said. The residents caught one of the thugs and hacked him to death. The man’s body lay on the street for some time because police officers said it was too dangerous to wade into the slum to retrieve it.

He lay on a dirt path between shanties with his face covered by plastic bags. Someone had stolen his shoes.

By 3 p.m., Raila Odinga, Kenya’s top opposition leader, officially called off what had been billed as a million-person rally, though by that point it was pretty clear that the riot police had succeeded in turning protesters back from the city center and had stopped the rally from going ahead.

It has been a week since Kenyans went to the polls in the most contested elections in the country’s history.

Kenya’s president, [Mwai Kibaki](#), was narrowly declared the winner but opposition supporters and Western observers said the president’s party rigged some of the results.

The anger over that has exploded across the country and incited violent protests, hooliganism and clashes between members of the president’s tribe, the Kikuyu, and other tribes who support the opposition, which is most of the 40 some tribes in the country.

The attorney general, Amos Wako, called in a statement Thursday for an independent body to verify the election count, The Associated Press reported.

More than 300 people have been killed in the violence and thousands of homes, shops and farms have been burned to the ground.

Because of the violence, the Nairobi Stock Exchange closed just one hour after opening on Thursday, a further blow to Kenya's economy, one of the biggest on the continent.

The effects of the insecurity here are rippling across all of East Africa. Fuel trucks, food, supplies and industrial materials are unable to cross from Kenya into Uganda, Congo, Rwanda, Sudan and other countries that depend on Kenya for their trade. Kenya's tea and coffee growers are having problems getting their commodities to the market.

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