

Kenyan City Is Gripped by Violence

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KISUMU, [Kenya](#) — Oginga Odinga Street, the main thoroughfare in town, is a testament to rage.

Dozens of stores have been looted, torched and smashed by rioters and then picked clean by an army of glue-sniffing street children searching for whatever was left. The scorched Ukwala supermarket looks as if a bomb blew up inside it. The gates of Zamana Electronic are mangled.

People here say this is just the beginning.

“We will never surrender!” yelled a man who attended a rally for opposition leaders on Saturday.

“We want guns, guns!” another man added.

While much of Kenya is trying to get back to normal after a week of post-election violence that has claimed more than 300 lives nationwide, Kisumu, Kenya’s third-largest city, is still quivering with anger. Few places have been so thoroughly gutted by the turbulence as here.

With Kenya’s leaders still at an impasse despite the efforts of Jendayi E. Frazer, the American assistant secretary of state for Africa who met with both sides on Saturday, it looks as if the tensions will linger dangerously for some time.

Kisumu is the stronghold of Raila Odinga, the opposition leader who said he had been cheated out of the presidency, and the town’s main street is named after his father, a local hero.

The people here followed the election so closely that they remember the precise hour last weekend, on Saturday, when the vote count suddenly changed, and [Mwai Kibaki](#), Kenya’s president, went from trailing badly to winning with a suspiciously thin margin of victory.

The town exploded, and a furious mob stormed up Oginga Odinga street. The biggest businesses are now in ashes. Fuel, food and cellphone credit are in short supply. And around 2,000 people from Mr. Kibaki’s tribe, the Kikuyu, are camped out at the police station, trying to escape a wave of revenge killings.

“If I stay here, I’ll be lynched,” said Waweru Mburu, a Kikuyu, as he nervously waited outside a supermarket, one of the two open in this town of half a million people. His wife had been waiting for hours, trying to buy milk.

Trucks carrying Kikuyu and evacuees from another tribe, the Kisii, many of whom supported Mr. Kibaki, are jeered at as they pull out of town. Those doing the jeering are mostly Luo, like Mr. Odinga, who live here in great numbers.

“Traitors!” some Luo shouted on Saturday as a truck passed.

People on both sides said the tensions would not ease as long as Kenya's political leaders refused to even speak to each other, which has been the situation since the election on Dec. 27.

On Saturday, Mr. Kibaki indicated that he was ready to form "a government of national unity." Mr. Odinga did not reject that outright but said he would not entertain any offers until the two sides sat down in the presence of foreign mediators.

The government initially rebuffed outside help, but seems to have relented slightly and sent a diplomat to Ghana to discuss a role for the [African Union](#), according to Reuters.

Ms. Frazer met separately with Mr. Kibaki and Mr. Odinga and urged them to work together to solve the crisis, which has dented Kenya's image as one of the most stable countries in Africa and could cause permanent economic damage if peace is not restored soon.

It seems that momentum is growing toward negotiations. "There is slow progress being made," said Salim Lone, a spokesman for Mr. Odinga.

Kenyans are waiting. Some areas, like the capital, have quieted down considerably. In the Rift Valley, the area most torn by violence, fewer killings have been reported in the past few days, but tens of thousands of people are displaced and in need of food.

In Kisumu, the killings have stopped, for the most part. But the banks are running out of money, few stores are open and the looting continues.

There is some opportunism to all this. The rage that swept through town was selective, striking at electronics shops, cellphone kiosks and shoe stores but leaving the drapery dealer alone.

On Saturday, Monica Awino tiptoed through the shattered interior of a Bata footwear store. Glass was everywhere. She used to work here and now is out of a job at the best time of year. No after-Christmas or back-to-school sales for her.

"I'm angry at everybody," she said.

Up the street, Bernard Ndede, a high school English teacher, watched street children carefully sift through inches of rubble on the floor of a charred supermarket, as if they were urban archaeologists.

He said he did not approve of the looting, but he understood the anger.

"People woke up so early that day to vote for change," he said, referring to election day and the millions of people who voted for Mr. Odinga. "They felt robbed."

For some, the disappointment was lethal. On Saturday, Albert Ojonyo, an insurance agent, went to the city morgue to pick up the body of his brother, Daniel. More than 40 people were killed here in election-related violence. Many bodies have not been identified and wait in a sweltering room under strips of red cloth with their feet poking out.

Mr. Ojonyo said his brother, who was 27, had been shot in the head, most likely by police officers trying to quell the rioters.

"Daniel felt very strongly about these elections," he said. "Afterward, he was a very bitter boy."

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