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Protests Bring New Violence in Kenya

By [JEFFREY GETTLEMAN](#)

NAIROBI, [Kenya](#) — Opposition protests resumed in Kenya on Wednesday, and as many people here feared, violence erupted across the country once again.

The worst clashes were in Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city and an opposition stronghold, where mobs of furious young men hurled stones at police officers, who responded by charging into the crowds and firing their guns.

One of Kenya's television stations broadcast images of a police officer in Kisumu shooting an unarmed protester who was dancing in the street and making faces at security agents. After the protester fell to the ground, the officer ran up to him and kicked him several times. Witnesses said the protester later died.

"There's been war since the morning," said Eric Otieno, a mechanic in Kisumu. "The police are whipping women, children, everyone. We were just trying to demonstrate peacefully."

Eric Kiraithe, a spokesman for the Kenyan police, said the only people wounded by police officers were hooligans destroying property and robbing people.

"What we are seeing are teams of young men trying to commit crimes," Mr. Kiraithe said. "You cannot call this a demonstration."

Opposition leaders have vowed to carry on protests for two more days, and it seems that Kenya's security forces, which have deemed all protests illegal, are cracking down harshly. On Wednesday afternoon, police officers in padded suits sealed off

downtown Nairobi, the capital, and ordered everyone out, sending wave after wave of bewildered office workers trudging down the roads leading to the suburbs.

Fourteen of Kenya's leading donors, including the United States, issued a statement this week warning the Kenyan government that they were reviewing foreign aid in light of the crisis. The United States gives the country more than \$600 million in aid each year.

It seems that Kenya has been unable to get back to normal after a flawed election on Dec. 27 ignited unrest and violence that has already claimed more than 600 lives. [Mwai Kibaki](#), the incumbent president, was declared the winner over [Raila Odinga](#), a top opposition leader, but several election observers said the government rigged the tallying of the results to give the president a slim, 11th-hour victory.

American diplomats in Kenya recently finished their own analysis of the voting results and concluded that the election was so flawed it was impossible to tell who really won.

Outraged opposition supporters have attacked members of the president's ethnic group, with many people killed by machete-wielding mobs. Most of the ethnic violence has diminished, though it has left more than 200,000 people displaced.

On Wednesday, many protesters said that they would continue to wreak havoc until Mr. Kibaki stepped down. Judging by the amount of live ammunition and tear gas that was fired at demonstrators or near them, police officials seem increasingly determined to show that they will not back down. Opposition leaders are not budging either.

"Nothing will stop us from mounting these rallies," Mr. Odinga said.

Kenya's economy, which powers trade and industry across a large part of eastern Africa, is taking a beating from all this. Tourists, drawn by wildlife and white-sand beaches, are canceling trips in droves, leaving some of the biggest hotels in the country only 20 percent occupied, which could lead to layoffs.

On Wednesday morning, protesters fought with the police in the streets of Mombasa, Kenya's biggest port and a main artery to the rest of East Africa. Witnesses said that hundreds of demonstrators, many of them Muslims, tried to block traffic circles in the city center but that police officers in riot gear chased them away with tear gas.

Previous unrest in Mombasa seriously disrupted food and fuel supplies, forcing several neighboring countries, like Uganda and Rwanda, to ration gasoline. Many Muslims in Kenya support the opposition because they believe that the Kenyan government, a close American ally, has persecuted members of their religion during counterterrorism operations.

Many Kenyans are getting tired of the violence and disruptions and the cloud of uncertainty that hangs over the country. They had hoped that tensions would now decrease because the opposition had demonstrated that it could influence the government through its numbers in Parliament and did not necessarily need to take its grievances to the streets.

On Tuesday night, the opposition party, which won more seats in Parliament than the president's party in the December elections, used its muscle to install one of its own members as speaker, which could mean serious gridlock in Kenya's government for the foreseeable future.

Kennedy Abwao contributed reporting.