

Fighting Intensifies After Election in Kenya

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Simon Maina/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

A man was attacked Monday in Nairobi by supporters of President Mwai Kibaki.

NAIROBI, [Kenya](#) — Kenya sank deeper into trouble on Monday, with a curfew imposed in Kisumu, the country's third-largest city, ethnic fighting intensifying and more than 100 people killed in election-related violence.

A knot of rage seems to be moving across the country, from the slums of Nairobi, the capital, to the cities along the Indian Ocean, to usually tranquil towns on the savannah. Many people are furious that President [Mwai Kibaki](#) was declared the winner on Sunday of the country's most fiercely fought election, despite widespread evidence of ballot rigging.

After three days of rioting, some streets in Nairobi are beginning to look like war zones. Trucks filled with soldiers rumbled through a wasteland of burned cars and abandoned homes, their tires crunching over broken glass. Gangs of young men have built roadblocks between neighborhoods of the Kikuyus, Mr. Kibaki's tribe, and the Luos, the tribe of Raila Odinga, the top opposition leader, who narrowly lost the election.

The no man's land between them is often a single lane of potholed asphalt, patrolled by men holding huge rocks in their hands.

The election has uncorked dangerous resentment toward the Kikuyus, the privileged ethnic group of Kenya, who have dominated business and politics since independence in 1963.

Witnesses said that in some areas mobs had stopped cars and pulled out passengers. They demanded identification cards to determine whether they were Kikuyu — one can often tell by the name — and if so, they were lynched. Six Kikuyus were hacked to death in Mombasa, on Kenya's eastern coast, Agence France-Presse reported.

The most intense fighting, though, is in western Kenya, Mr. Odinga's stronghold, where a mix of hooliganism, political protest and ethnic violence has taken dozens of lives. The police have responded by shooting looters on sight and ordering a curfew in Kisumu, barring people from leaving home at night or walking around during the day in groups of more than two.

The Kenyan internal security minister has outlawed live television broadcasts nationwide because, he said, the coverage was inciting riots.

Many Kenyans, who take pride that their country is one of the most stable and prosperous in Africa, said they felt ashamed about the turn their nation has taken. "This is a total throwback," said Maina Kiai, chairman of the Kenya National [Commission on Human Rights](#). "We are going back to the days of dictatorship."

But a lot of people have not given up on democracy. On Monday, several hundred men in a mixed Kikuyu-Luo slum held a peace march. They met in the road that divides their enclaves, distinctions nobody really cared about until a few days ago, and spoke about putting down their weapons and working out their problems.

"For all these years, we've been living together," said Stanley Maina, a Kikuyu shopkeeper. "Why are we fighting now?"

One Luo man yelled out, "Let Raila and Kibaki fight! They are presidents; we are just people!"

Those in the crowd pumped their fists in the air and cheered.

The decision by Kenya's election commission on Sunday to declare Mr. Kibaki the winner of the disputed election held Thursday has thrown the country into a crisis without an obvious solution.

Western diplomats said that there was undeniable evidence of fraud at the ballot tallying level but that election officials refused to do a recount because they wanted to keep the government in power.

Mr. Kibaki, 76, faces trouble not just on the streets but in Parliament as well. More than half of his cabinet was voted out of office, and his party won about 35 seats in Parliament, compared with about 100 for the opposition.

Before the election, Mr. Kibaki was considered a courtly gentleman who stirred few passions. Now mobs of outraged voters are burning pictures of him and calling him a cheat.

It is not clear what opposition leaders will do. They had planned to hold their own inauguration on Monday and anoint Mr. Odinga, 62, the “people’s president.” But the government warned that such an event would be considered a coup and sent hundreds of riot police officers in padded suits to the Nairobi park where the ceremony was to take place. The opposition decided to postpone the ceremony until Thursday.

Mr. Odinga has rebuffed the government’s invitations to negotiate a power-sharing deal, saying that Mr. Kibaki is not the legitimate head of state. “We will bring down this government by peaceful and democratic means,” he said Monday, without specifying the means.

Western officials have become increasingly critical of the elections, and two of Kenya’s largest donors issued pointed statements on Monday. The United States, which initially congratulated Mr. Kibaki on his victory, said there were “serious problems experienced during the vote counting process” including “unrealistically high voter turnout” and “apparent manipulation of some election reporting documents.”

Canada deplored the news media blackout and said it was “very concerned about incidents of violence, and by irregularities in the post-election process and the response by Kenyan authorities.”

The mood in Nairobi was hardly festive on New Year’s Eve. Though the wealthier neighborhoods have not been hit by riots, stores were running out of food. Many people skipped parties, frightened of driving in the dark. Many roads to town were blocked by soldiers who warned drivers that if they entered the city, their cars could be burned.