



Genocide Watch Alert: Kenya 2 May 2012

Since late-February 2008, when Kenya's 2007 post-election violence finally ceased as the result of external mediation and the formation of a coalition government, the Republic of Kenya has made much progress toward good governance and national stability. However, the government is still resisting indictments by the International Criminal Court against leading politicians over the 2007 violence.

Tensions are again rising as the first presidential and parliamentary elections under the new constitution are set to take place March 4, 2013. As prescribed by Kenya's 2010 constitution, the upcoming elections will launch the new devolved government structure, in which the country will be separated into 47 counties and new regional political powers will be elected.

As districts and boundaries are set to merge under the new county system, many local populations feel their territorial control is under threat. As a result, ethnic tensions and violence are increasing throughout the country. Genocide Watch places Kenya at Stage 5 (Polarization) on the 8 Stages of Genocide and again issues a *Genocide Watch* due to the current political climate and the country's history of political and ethnic violence.

Genocide Watch is particularly concerned with the outbreak of ethnic violence targeting the Turkana people in the Isiolo region of Northern Kenya. In the past year, escalating violence has killed over 70 Turkana and approximately 10,000 more have been displaced.

The Isiolo region has been traditionally diverse, home to numerous different ethnic groups, including the Turkana, Borana, Somali, Meru and Samburu communities. These communities have generally coexisted peacefully, with occasional tribal violence attributed to traditional cattle-rustling. Disputes over territory and power due to the upcoming elections have had serious effects in the Isiolo region.

Beginning in mid-2011, a pattern of violence arose that has specifically targeted members of the Turkana tribe. The primary perpetrators of the violence have been Somali and Borana tribesmen. Contrary to official reports that have dismissed the violence as traditional cattle-rustling among rival pastoral communities, recent attacks seem to have been motivated by ethnic animosity alone, instigated by political and economic prospects. According to local reports in January 2012, attacks against the Turkana lacked the traditional motive of theft of livestock or property, and had characteristics of genocidal massacres. Borana government officials are believed to be arming Borana and Somali communities to drive out Turkana communities that would back their electoral opponents.

There are also mounting disputes over land ownership. Competition over communal land that provides water resources and new economic opportunities, such as a proposed resort city, has also aggravated ethnic animosity, resulting in violent clashes.

Genocide Watch recognizes the following to be early warning signs of genocidal violence in the Isiolo region:

- The denial of Kenyan identity cards to Turkana people- part of a vetting process that lawfully should not apply to Kenyan Turkana- by a biased committee of Borana and government officials;
- Systematic attacks on Turkana homes and villages, including fatal attacks, burning and looting;
- Indiscriminant killing of Turkana women and children;
- Deliberate destruction of Turkana land and agricultural resources;
- Violent attacks on Turkana planned by Borana politicians;
- A history of ethnic discrimination against the Turkana;
- Government corruption.

Although few human rights groups have noted these threats to the Turkana, Genocide Watch believes their situation is at Stage 6: Preparation.