



**Facts about...**  
**Majeshi ya Wazee**

Makumi Mwagiru

Olang Sana

Kenneth P. Njau

Edited by Wahome Mutahi



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## Foreword

Political activist, political thug, goon, mobiliser? Who is this? Does it really matter what we call them?

The name to call them has been a subject of debate whenever discussions among groups involved in a project on pre-electoral violence in Nairobi are held. But isn't the issue to worry about what they do as opposed to the "politically" correct and sensitive name to call them?

Is a thug an activated mass of human energy fired by a strong desire for money, pure thirst for blood or just survival? Or is it a person who, after careful scrutiny of the situation and conditions around them, decides enough of a bad thing is enough and goes out with one conviction – we must change the way things are by hook or crook! – A conviction or ideology?

Pre-electoral violence is not a strange phenomenon in Nairobi, in particular and Kenya in general. Its impact as an instrument of intimidation to force "popularity" is glaringly evident. Acts of terror unleashed by youths associated with one or other politician or power brokers commanding groups known as *jeshis* or militias need not be over-emphasised. These sometimes fatal acts are committed in the name of, sometimes age old animalistic practices, such as marking of territories, as evidenced in the creation of no-go areas in the name of one or other political party zoning.

The Centre for Conflict Research (CCR) sought to answer a few questions that were emerging more and more often as political temperatures rose especially prior to a by-election or general election. The research sought to answer the following questions among others:

- Who are these political thugs?
- From where do they get their motivation?
- Where does the demand for their services come from?
- Who are the suppliers and their backgrounds?
- How are they recruited?
- How are they organised?
- Is it for ideology or just for money?

In this first publication on the findings of a study of political violence in Nairobi, the researchers answer some of these questions. The study was conducted from October to December, 2001.

It is hoped that with the publication of the results, more thought and ways to reduce or eliminate the phenomenon altogether, will be put to the issues raised. If left unattended, political violence threatens to tear through the very fabric of one of the most important democratic practices in any country – ELECTIONS.

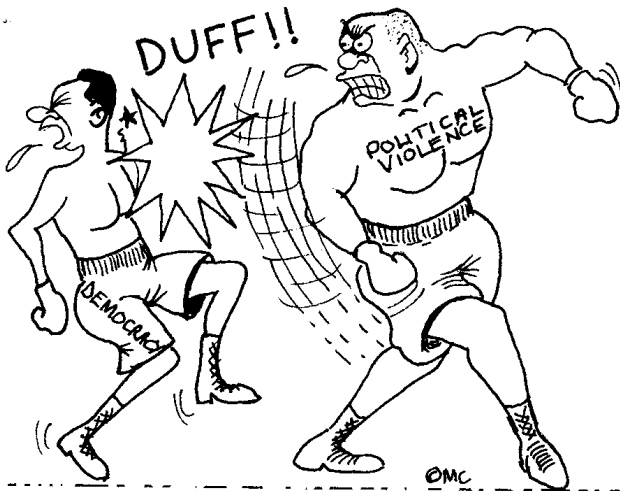
**Wanjiku Mbugua**  
Project Co-ordinator  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

**Dr. Makumi Mwagiru**  
Director  
Centre for Conflict Research (CCR)



## Introduction

Political violence in Kenya is as old as the nation. However, new forms of political violence began to feature significantly in 1988. From then, youths have either been hired by politicians to perpetrate violence against opponents or provide them with security. This has worked well for the sponsors of violence and since then it has been a popular way of getting and keeping power.



**Political violence is a threat to democracy.**

The re-introduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s not only popularized the demand and supply of political violence but also introduced new dimensions to it. Today, political violence is the single biggest threat to elections and the democratization process. Besides causing loss of life in the last one-

decade, hundreds of people have been injured and property of unknown value destroyed as a result of political violence.

Intensified political violence is expected because of the following reasons:

- General elections in 2002
- Succession politics within and outside the ruling party Kenya African National Union (KANU)
- Disputes in and between Kenyan political parties
- Increasing poverty and unemployment because of a poor economy

This publication investigates political violence in Nairobi and why it happens. It is based on a research done in three of



the eight constituencies in Nairobi Province where there have been many incidents of violence especially since the re-introduction of multi party politics. They are Embakasi, Langata and Westlands.

The other constituencies in Nairobi are Dagoretti, Makadara, Kamukunji, Kasarani and Starehe. There are total of 55 wards.

Nairobi has been a critical city with regard to international peace initiatives. Nationally, it serves Kenya as the seat of highest authority in the land and the headquarters of government ministries and departments. It has the highest concentration of industries, market and labour in the East and Central African region. Given its vitality, a security threat to Nairobi is a potential danger to both regional and international peace. This justifies the need for a study of political violence.

Although the survey was carried out in three out of eight constituencies that constitute Nairobi, the findings can be applied to the rest of the city, but not to other urban or non-urban constituencies with different problems and issues



## **History of Political Violence in Nairobi**

The history of political violence in Nairobi goes back to the beginning of the century. The coming of colonialism was accompanied by violence and Africans naturally reacted to it with more violence. The most marked period of political

violence however was the Mau-Mau rebellion when Africans embarked on armed struggle against the colonial government.

The Mau-Mau resistance struggle was characterised by violence against the settlers and the government, as well as their African supporters just as the colonial government used it to oppress Africans and to keep them in control. The last years before independence were



**The Mau-Mau used political violence against the settlers and the government.**

chaotic in Nairobi and selected parts of the Kenya highlands that served both as the capital and military base of the colonial government. During that period, thousands of Africans who engaged in war or protest to end the colonial government were isolated and killed. The other side also faced losses.

Nairobi was seriously affected by the Mau-Mau war. Thousands of people were killed and injured. Others were displaced. Property of great value was destroyed.

Between 1963 and 1987, there were isolated incidents of political violence in Nairobi. The assassination of Tom Mboya, Gio Gama Pinto, and J.M Kariuki, all prominent politicians, sparked off violent protests against the State. The murder of Tom Mboya caused tension and violence



both in Nairobi and Kisumu. The murder was widely viewed by pro-Mboya forces as a strategy to check the political progress of the Luo.

The formation of the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga in 1966 was followed by political violence. The State used violence mostly under the guise of KANU youth wingers to intimidate members of the KPU.

Apart from a few incidents, political violence was not a major problem in Nairobi for a long period until 1988. During that year, KANU youth wingers began to be dominant in Nairobi as key perpetrators of political violence. The youth wingers were deployed to bus stages in Nairobi allegedly to protect the public from being harassed by touts. This made them clash frequently with the touts they were seeking to replace and a few cases of death were reported.

The services of the KANU youth wingers were also vital in the general election of the same year. Some politicians in Nairobi reportedly hired the wingers during the nomination campaigns to harass their opponents. The nomination day was relatively violent in many stations in Nairobi and scores of people were injured.

Violence was also caused by the queue-voting method where it was alleged that candidates with shorter queues emerged victorious. In Nairobi, police arrested scores of people and found them with all kinds of weapons including stones, pangas, rungas, iron bars, among others. No death was reported though.



## 1988 - 1992

Towards the end of 1988, there was a major violent confrontation in Nairobi between matatu owners/operators and KANU youth wingers. The battle began when matatu owners went on strike due to harassment by the youth wingers. The former had the support of touts who, in a bid to retain their income generating activity mobilised their lot all over Nairobi and engaged the wingers in violence. Although the police interceded to restore order, scores of people were seriously injured in the two-week battle.

It is important to note that the members of the public- especially in Nairobi - were getting increasingly impatient with the operations of the KANU youth wingers. The wingers were becoming more powerful in the enforcement (sic) of law and order than even the police. In due course, some of them started engaging in such excesses as stealing and committing murders.



**Youth wingers were becoming powerful than the police.**

The battle between matatu owners, touts and KANU youth wingers continued throughout 1989. One death was reported in Nairobi's Machakos bus station allegedly committed by a KANU youth winger. In reaction, the government issued a stern warning against the wingers who performed their roles without the company of the police.



## 1993 - 2001

Even though the battle between the touts and KANU youth wingers over the control of bus termini in the city continued into 1990, serious tension and eruption of organised political violence began in earnest towards the end of that year when the demand for many parties was taken up by more people.

The clergy and a few politicians joined hands to press for the re-introduction of multiparty politics in the country to which the State was strongly opposed. To silence the advocates of multi-partism, the KANU government recruited more youth wingers purposely to intimidate and beat up the multi-party advocates. 1991 newspaper reports were littered with numerous incidents of the youth wingers harassing, intimidating or meting violence against actual or suspected multi-party advocates in selected parts of Nairobi.

Conflicts within KANU also emerged in mid-1991 and became more pronounced later in the year. The conflicts emerged mainly over control of party positions at the district level. To defeat opponents, individual KANU politicians in Nairobi and elsewhere recruited and armed youths who ran riots and perpetrated violence in most districts in Kenya. No deaths were reported.

After section 2 (A) of the constitution of Kenya was repealed, more political parties emerged in a bid to win political power. This caused more political violence as the State tried to interfere with political activities of opposition parties. In Nairobi, opposition party meetings and rallies were violently disrupted by the police and KANU youth wingers and hired youths.

In reaction to such rampant disruptions of rallies and intimidation activities, each opposition party recruited its own youth wingers

to counter the KANU attacks or just to provide security as they went about their duties. This explains why the Kamukunji rally of late 1991 held by the joint opposition recorded the highest incidences of violence. Tens of people were killed and hundreds injured in the battle that ensued between the police, GSU and KANU Youth wingers on one side against a combined force of opposition party supporters, sympathizers and youth wingers who attended the meeting. Property worth millions of Kenya shillings was also looted in the city and the estates.



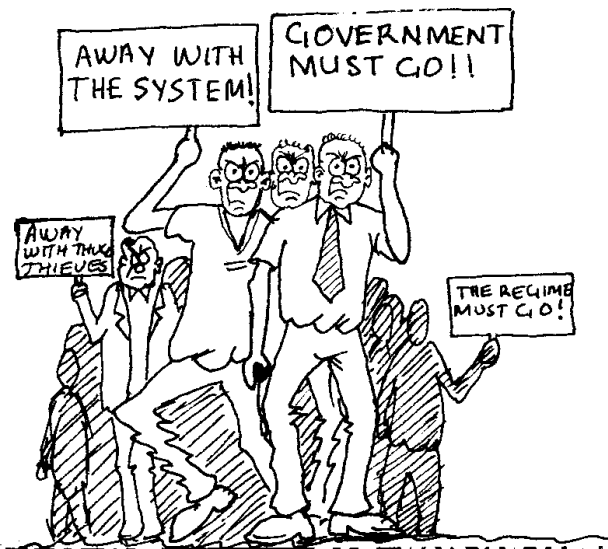
**Youth wingers were used prominently in 1988 elections.**

As the 1992 general elections drew closer, confrontations within and between parties emerged causing splits. In particular the original Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Ford) split into Ford-Kenya and Ford-Asili. This brought tension between the two factions with each regarding the other as the traitor. Youth wingers of the opposed camps were reported to have engaged each other in battles over the fight for legitimacy and supremacy in Nairobi where most opposition meetings were held. At a Ford-Kenya/Ford-Asili meeting in Ufungamano House, hired youths disrupted the function and seriously beat up selected politicians who were suspected to have betrayed the opposition cause.

Other incidents of political violence noted in Nairobi were demolition of party offices and burning of party membership cards by opponents. Selected politicians' homes were also invaded and property either stolen or vandalised.

There were also occasional fights over campaign money especially among youth wingers of various political parties. Two deaths were reported in Nairobi and most of the parties affected acted promptly to reduce violence within them.

Student riots also added to the already tense environment of political violence. In Nairobi, Students Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU) had just been re-launched. Students took to the streets demanding their rights and the immediate resignation of the government. They violently clashed with the combined force of the General Services Unit (GSU) and the police.



University students engaged the police in battles.

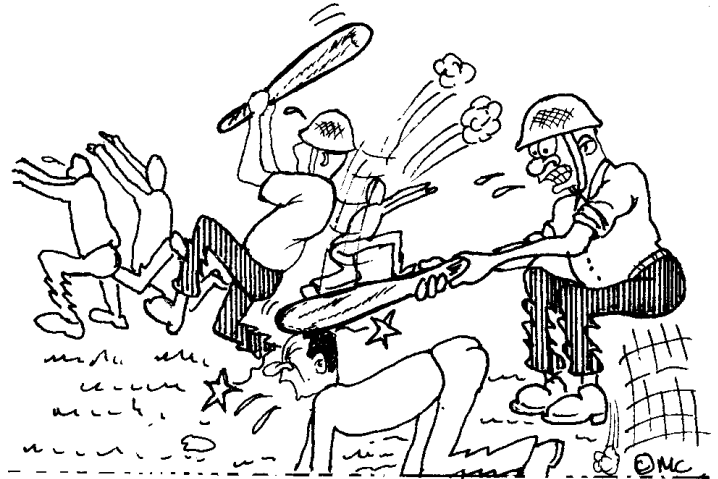
The 1992 general elections were, therefore, held in an atmosphere of tension, suspicion and violence. KANU won and formed the government despite allegations by opposition leaders that the polls were rigged. A few by-elections caused by defections were held in 1993 in the affected parts of the country turned violent. Nairobi was however, not affected.

The period after 1992 general elections up until 1995 was fairly peaceful in most of Nairobi. However, as the 1997 general elections approached, there were more demands that the constitution be changed. Pockets of violent confrontations were recorded in Nairobi especially between the University of Nairobi students and the police.

The 1997 general elections were violent. Political rallies were disrupted in Nairobi, which was mainly an opposition

zone. People were injured and property was destroyed. At the end of the exercise, KANU won the elections and formed the government again amidst protests of rigging and use of State machinery in its campaign. The election exercise this time was more or less a repetition of 1992 episode.

After the 1997 general elections, the Opposition teamed up with other forces to pressurise the government to allow the citizens to change the constitution. The State was not willing to do so and the rallies organized by the opposition to mobilize the citizens for this cause were violently disrupted by the State especially in Nairobi's Kamukunji grounds and Central park.



**In Nairobi, opposition party meetings and rallies were violently disrupted by the police and KANU youth wingers and hired youths.**

As the constitutional reform struggle mounted, two parallel groups emerged - the Parliamentary Select Committee and the Ufungamano Committee. The former was an organ mandated by the Kenya National Assembly to review and make possible amendments to the Kenyan Constitution, while the later was voluntarily formed by some opposition members of parliament and civil society to perform a similar role. Both claimed to represent the citizens.

The two constitutional reform groups' supporters violently clashed in Nairobi during the conduct of their affairs. In one such violent incident in 2000, the Ufungamano Committee supporters made deliberate attempts to disrupt the Parliamentary select Committee sessions in Nairobi.



In a session held at the University of Nairobi Taifa Hall, scores of people were hurt in the well-organised battles between the two forces. During such incidents, the activities of Jeshi La Mzee (JLM), a political militia and University of Nairobi students became increasingly significant as perpetrators of violence. The phenomenon of “Youths for Hire” began to feature prominently. The JLM militia group supported the State and Parliamentary Select Committee while the students community was divided between the State and Ufungamano initiative.

In much of 2000, the activities of newly formed Mageuzi (Change) Movement increased political violence considerably. The rallies and meetings organised by the two groups both in Nairobi and other towns were violently disrupted and ended up with arrests, injuries and death of the involved parties. The violence continued much into the year 2001.

As the country prepares for the 2002 general elections, political violence seem to be taking a different and more dreadful dimension. The socio-economic and political conditions in the country have prompted the sponsorship of a series of militia groups by various politicians in Nairobi purposely for winning the 2002 general elections and consolidation of political power. A large group of youths also seem to have seen the economic gain to be made out of political violence and are only awaiting recruitment. This trend poses a great threat not only to the democratization process but also to the next elections which are expected to be another major turning point to the country's political history since they will see the inauguration of the nation's third president.

**Table 1:** *Reported cases of injury in Kenya resulting from political Violence between 1988-1999*

<b>Year &amp; Date of Occurrence</b>	<b>Place of Occurrence</b>	<b>Number Injured</b>
19th March 1988	Karachuonyo	11
29th February 1988	Kikuyu	4
24th November 1989	Meru	5
1st April 1989	Nairobi	1
13th January 1990	Thika	2
27th March 1990	Nairobi	*
6th April 1990	Nairobi	1
9th July 1990	Nairobi/ Kariobangi	10
12th July 1990	Thika	24
11th July 1990	Thika, Central & Rift Valley	63
12th July 1990	Thika	24
4th August 1990	Muoroto, Nairobi	*
2nd February 1992	Juja	2
7th February 1992	Kisii	2
13th February 1992	Ngong Town	3
23rd February 1992	Bungoma	*
20th April 1992	Nakuru	*
27th April 1992	Limuru	1
29th June	Chiplas R. Valley	*
20th September 1992	Mombasa	*
26th November 1992	Nairobi (Dandora)	1
2nd November 1992	Oyugis	3
9th November 1992	Rangwe (Homa-Bay)	1
10th November 1992	Suneka (Kisii)	*
13th November 1992	Kongowea, Mombasa	*
14th November 1992	Kitutu Chache (Kisii)	3
24th March 1993	Nairobi	*

29th March 1993	Nakuru	1
3rd April 1993	Nairobi	2
4th April 1993	Nairobi (Uhuru Park)	*
8th May 1993	Nairobi	7
17th May 1993	Suneka Market (Kisii)	*
20th May 1993	Kisii	1
16th May 1995	Mandera	4
19th January 1995	North Rift	3
19th April 1995	Bondo	*
25th July 1995	Kakamega	220
8th July 1995	Kisumu	2
4th September 1995	Siaya	*
23rd November 1995	Kakamega	4
14th March 1993	Mombasa/ Nairobi	19
1st April 1996	Kakamega/ Nairobi	19
11th April 1996	Nandi	*
27th May 1996	Nairobi	*
3rd June 1996	Molo	1
13th July 1996	Mwea	*
22nd July 1996	Nairobi (Westlands)	1
7th October 1996	Nairobi	1
19th December	Maua town	*
25th April 1997	Kisumu	*
9th May 1997	Kamkunji Nairobi	*
1st June 1997	Nairobi	*
6th June 1997	Nairobi (Uhuru Park)	*
8th June 1997	Mombasa	3
11th June 1997	Kisii	1
2nd November	Mombasa (Likoni)	*
16th November 1997	Uasin Gishu	10
17th November 1997	Kuria District	1
23rd November 1997	Kilgoris town	1



24th November 1997	Nyaribari Chache	1
27th November 1997	Nyamira Kisii	2
26th November 1997	Machakos	*
27th January 1998	Njoro	*
4th February 1998	Nairobi	*
8th February 1998	Nairobi (Karura)	*
19th January 1998	Makueni	*

Note \* indicates that several/ many but unknown number of people were injured

**Table 2:** *Reported cases of deaths in Kenya resulting from political violence between 1988-1999*

<b>Year &amp; Date of Occurrence</b>	<b>Place of Occurrence</b>	<b>Number Injured</b>
19th March 1989	Kakamega	1
9th July 1990	Nairobi	3
10 July 1990	Nairobi	6
11th July 1990	Nairobi, Central & Rift Valley	15
12th July 1990	Rift Valley	5
13th July 1990	Nairobi	1
11th November 1992	Kisii	1
1st April 1996	Nairobi	1
23rd November 1997	Laikipia	2
2nd November 1997	Mombasa (Likoni)	70
25th November 1997	Kakamega (Lugari)	2
27th January 1998	Laikipia (massacre)	55
8th February 1998	Nairobi (Karura)	1
17th December 1998	Nairobi	1
27th June 1998	Njoro	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>167</b>

Source: Compiled from Daily Nation, East African Standard, Finance Magazine and Mwananchi Magazine



## Social status of the actual and potential perpetrators of political violence

Majority of political thugs live in low income estates of Westlands (Kangemi), Lang'ata (Kibera) and Embakasi (Dandora, Kayole). They also include other estates in other constituencies in Nairobi, with low class settlements - Makadara, Kasarani, Kawangware, and Kamukunji. Within these estates, the actual and potential recruits live among other citizens and it becomes fairly difficult to identify them because they do not have any distinct peculiarities that may at once distinguish them from other citizens.



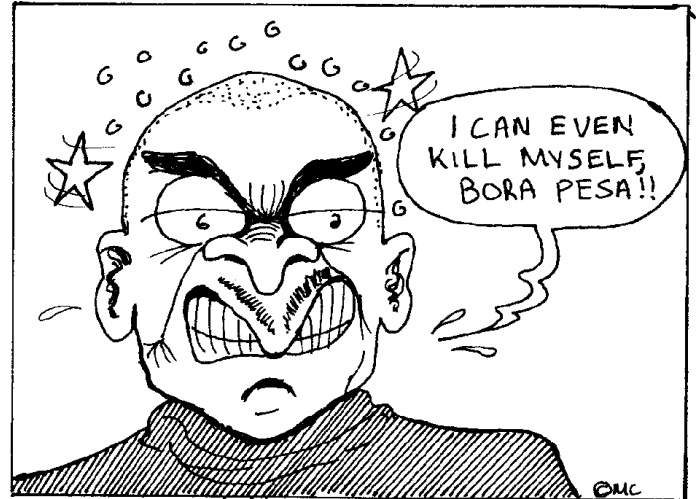
The majority of the actual or potential political thugs have moderate education which ranges between Class Eight to Form Four. They are, therefore, a fairly literate lot that can be involved in various forms of economic production if the opportunities are available. University graduates are also engaged in the practice but their presence is insignificant in other constituencies outside Kileleshwa ward which hosts the University of Nairobi.

According to research, eighty two per cent of the known perpetrators of political violence are men. In some estates that are more prone to violence, an estimated figure of these people can be established. The nature of the involvement of women tends to differ from one estate to another. In some estates for instance, women support political thuggery by running *changaa* drinking houses where the perpetrators of violence are recruited either by the women themselves or by male agents. The estates and wards where women are involved include Kibera (Lang'ata), and Kangemi (Westlands). A few actual figures of known female

perpetrators can be established. The study found out that women generally do not engage in physical combat as one way of executing violence against their opponents. They basically act as liason persons, spies and/or intelligence units for the thugs and their hirers.

Perpetrators and sponsors of political violence are not drawn from any specific ethnic group. Instead, each ward has ethnic peculiarities that influence their chances of getting involved in violence. Kangemi for instance has a big population of Luhyas, which makes them the majority of the actual and potential perpetrators of violence in the ward or area. The same trend applies in Kibera, which is widely settled by the Luo and Dandora/Kariobangi South region which houses many Kikuyus. The issue of the conflict determines the degree and nature of involvement which in essence introduces the tribal dimension. The chart below shows the dominant ethnic groups that are settled in the wards in which the study was conducted.

The known or potential perpetrators of political violence are jobless youths who spend most of their time idling around the city, shopping centres or in estates. To make ends meet, especially when there is no immediate assignment for them, some engage in small income generating businesses such as roasting maize, selling cigarettes, dealing in drugs and operating small kiosks. Potential recruits may at times include hardened criminals such as professional car jarkers



**About 90% of actual perpetrators of political violence are social misfits or drug addicts.**



and bank robbers depending on the amount of money given or promised by the sponsor. There are many potential recruits in the matatu business where they serve as touts and drivers and compliment their meagre income by engaging in petty crimes like pick pocketing. However, not all jobless people are potential recruits. Investigations discovered that about 90% of actual perpetrators of political violence are social misfits or drug addicts who would do anything illegal to earn money that they would later spend on drugs or alcohol.

**Table 3:** *The dominant ethnic groups settled in the wards sampled for the study*

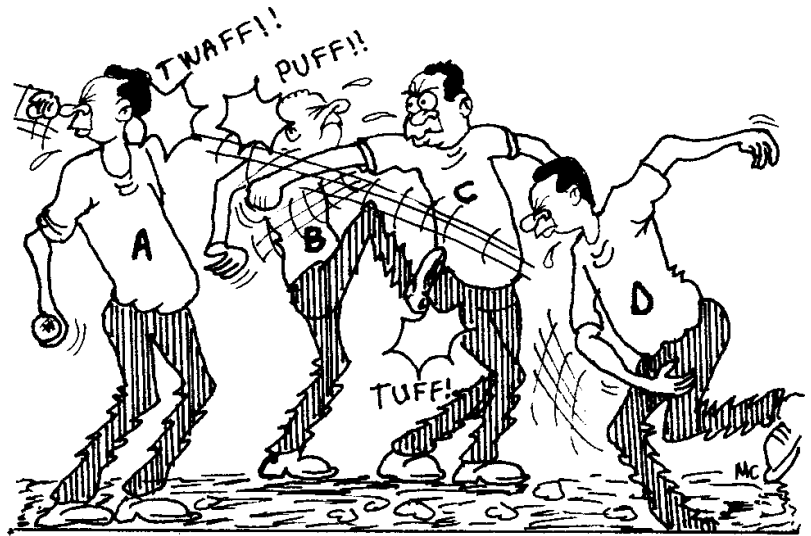
	Kikuyu	Luo	Luhya	Kamba	Kisii	Nubians	Mixed
<b>Kibera</b>		X				X	
<b>Mugumo-ini</b>							X
<b>Kangemi</b>	X		X				
<b>Kileleshwa</b>							X
<b>Dandora</b>	X						
<b>Komarock</b>							X
<b>Kariobangi South</b>	X						
<b>Umoja</b>							X



## Parties and individuals involved in political violence

Political thugs in Lang'ata, Embakasi and Westlands are youths who do not have any special training for the tasks they perform. Other groups from which actual and potential perpetrators come from have experience in the armed forces, police and formalised militia groups, where they may have worked previously.

This investigation found out that most of the groups in Nairobi including Mungiki, Kamjesh, Jeshi la Mzee, 42 Brothers, Bagdad boys and Msumbiji are mainly made up of young people.



As the 1992 general elections drew closer, confrontations within and between parties increased.

The main sponsors of political violence in Nairobi are politicians vying for civic, parliamentary, presidential or political party seats. Also mentioned, as sponsors of violence are government officials not actively involved in politics, but who have varied interests within the localities where conflicts break. Cases were cited in the Embakasi region where government officials are involved in grabbing public land. These officers hire the services of thugs to protect their resources from encroachment by members of the public.



Businessmen especially the matatu owners are also sponsors of political violence. The routes affected adversely in this respect are numbers 8, 23 and 36, which operate in the Kibera, Kangemi and Dandora regions respectively. Very few cases were mentioned of involvement of local residents in sponsoring violence.

Some of the sponsors of violence live within the wards and constituencies where the study was done, while others have residences elsewhere but within Nairobi. Most of the councilors live within their respective wards that they represent. However, some of the civic leaders have either bought, developed or grabbed a series of homes in various localities in Nairobi to which they keep on shifting to depending on need.

The popularity of political parties in Nairobi mainly depends on the ethnic composition of the political unit (constituency or ward) in relation to the ethnic structure of the party leadership.

In Westlands constituency, which is represented in parliament by a KANU member, the study found out that KANU is the most popular party because of Luhya and Asian communities residing in the constituency and who have over the years been associated with the KANU regime.

In Langata constituency, the most popular political party has been the National Development Party (NDP). However, in the emerging scenario of political party alliances and mergers most people are at a loss as to, which is the right political party to follow. That notwithstanding, NDP -

especially in Kibera - slums is the most popular party. Within Mugumo-ini ward, which seem to be predominately Kikuyu, the Democratic Party (DP) is the most popular party.

In Embakasi the most popular political party is DP partly because the Kikuyu ethnic community constitutes the majority of the population and also because other parties have not made significant attempts to recruit the area residents into their respective parties. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) appears popular in Koma-Rock ward.

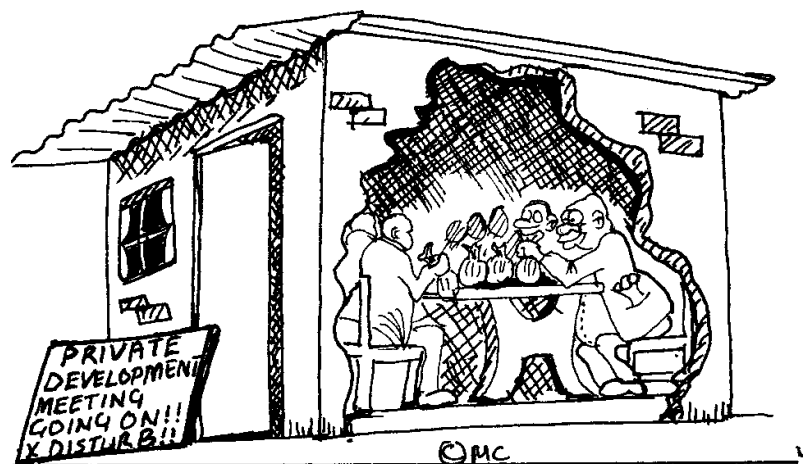
In Kileleshwa ward where Nairobi University students are by virtue of the location of the university, there seems to be a fairly liberal attitude towards political parties and no single political party is predominantly popular there.



## Recruitment process and tools used by perpetrators of political violence

Agents and sub-agents identify potential recruits. Recruitment is usually done when there is a pending violent activity to be executed purposely to win political mileage over an opponent.

This is done during mostly nominations or election campaigns



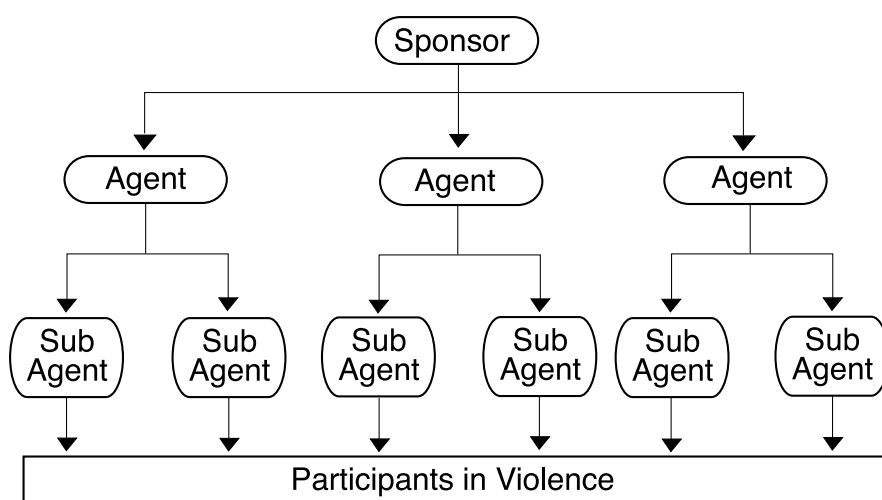
Recruitment is a fairly closed exercise.



for civic, parliamentary, presidential or for political party positions especially at national and branch levels.

Recruitment is a fairly closed exercise. The agents or sub-agents at times walk into a gathering of idle youths usually led by a fellow youth who knows the area and explains the assignment. He then inquires how many people are willing to help out on stipulated financial terms. The negotiation process then begins, and taking into consideration the risks involved and the desperation of the youths to be hired they may strike a deal.

### Structure of organized political violence



On certain occasions, the chief sponsor may demand to see and talk to the recruits before the assignment is executed. It is believed that such meetings - equally secret - are meant to boost the morale of the perpetrators. The sponsors usually justify the reasons why violence at that stage is necessary and assure the recruits of assistance should police arrest or injure any of them.

On special occasions, the sponsors identify and recruit the violators themselves. The contestants for civic seats and the less popular contestants for parliamentary and presidential positions mainly do that and so do those who may not suffer



public humiliation for getting directly involved. In addition, dishonesty among some agents and sub-agents demand the personal involvement of the sponsors in the identification and recruitment process.

Related to the above recruitment process are cases where potential recruits look for the sponsors and inquire whether there is any assignment to be done. In most cases, the potential recruits present to the sponsor some on going development which needs immediate containment through violence. Such developments include the opponent maligning the name of the potential violence sponsor, a new popular candidate on the race, or an opponent bribing voters heavily. Depending on the seriousness and urgency of the matter presented by the potential recruits, the sponsor may ask them to prepare themselves and attack the opponent and his supporters before the situation gets out of hand.



**The tools commonly used in the execution of violence are crude weapons.**

- From accounts of those who have been involved in political violence either as perpetrators or victims, the tools commonly used in the execution of violence are crude weapons such as stones, iron bars, axes, machetes, knives, whips and rungs.

Among the crude weapons, stones are handy not only because they are readily available but also because they are fairly portable. Some people who are caught up in violent clashes unprepared usually use their hands and legs to fight their way out.



Modern weapons such as petrol bombs and guns are also being introduced into political violence especially because of the proliferation of illegal guns in the Kenyan black market. The use of guns, however, and petrol bombs is still relatively low.

Choice and use of weapons depend on the seriousness of the issue of conflict and the “military” preparedness of the opponent. For instance, when political thugs are hired to kill or burn houses, they choose such weapons as petrol bombs and pangas which are apt for the task. The choice of weapons also depends on the hour of the operation. During the day, most political thugs would avoid carrying weapons which can be easily seen and identified for security reasons but they are far too willing to carry any weapons at night. At night, anything goes!!



## **Motivation, and Consequences of political violence**

Political violence has increased over the past years. This is shown by the increasing number of incidents of political violence within residential estate and in the city and by the aggressive recruitment of young people into the practice.

Rivalry in political parties especially since the early 90s is the main cause of politically-motivated conflicts in Nairobi. These conflicts are found in the mainstream political parties in Kenya: KANU, NDP, DP, FORD KENYA, SDP, FORD ASILI and SAFINA.

The second major reason has been personal rivalry problems between individual politicians exhibited during election for

various political seats. In Embakasi, one candidate for instance emerged the victor among his opponents in a parliamentary race because he was more capable of using violence than any of the other candidates. This is believed to have been the case with the victors in some of the other constituencies that have faced political violence.



The major motivation behind the perpetuation of violence is monetary gain.

Ethnic dominance or suspicion has also been responsible for political violence in the areas sampled for the study. In Kibera for example, fights over ethnic dominance broke out in 1995 and 1996 between the Luo and the Nubians, who form a significant proportion of the Lang'ata residents. According to the affected people, there is a belief among many people that they are more secure in estates which are predominantly inhabited by members of their community. In an event of infiltration or possible dominance by an unfriendly tribe, tribal conflicts erupt to evict the unwanted people. In certain instances, this violence is executed with the assistance of the politicians, to secure and consolidate the votes of their kinsmen.

The fight to get business opportunities was also cited as past cause of political violence though insignificantly.

An example of conflicts caused by competition for resources is in Embakasi. It is over a big piece of land that is owned by the State. Politicians in Embakasi constituency have always



wanted the Government to settle the landless residents of Dandora and surrounding estate on this piece of land and since negotiations have been slow and unpromising. The said politicians have individually allocated people this piece of land. Since these allocations are regarded as illegal by the State, the squatters have been evicted, others arrested, and this has always heightened tension between the law enforcers and the affected squatters. In several incidences of eviction, bloody skirmishes have erupted between the police and the squatters. The State sees illegal allocation of land to squatters as a strategy by the opposition to gain political mileage. The area MP has been accused of allocating this land to his supporters only.

The major motivation behind the perpetuation of violence is monetary gain. This partly explains why the phenomenon attracts hundreds of young unemployed youths. The amounts of money usually paid to the public thugs depend on their position and role in the group. The agents with direct contract with the sponsors receive more, while the actual perpetrators receive less. It also depends on the difficulty of the assignment. The least pay in Langata, Embakasi and Westlands per thug is two hundred shillings.

Apart money, there are other inducements on offer. In the three constituencies surveyed, expectation of drinks and drugs with or without accompanying money also attract a sizeable number of people into the practice. Political thugs usually drink alcohol or smoke bhang before they go for execution of violence. These drugs are meant to give them confidence and courage to 'work' well.

Some political thugs engage in the practice on the strength of certain promises given to them by the sponsors. In

Embakasi, expectation to get free land as a reward is a major drive in perpetuation of violence. The agents usually keep a list of active perpetrators either during election time or when a contentious issue arises which they do present to the sponsor for allocation.



**Government officials liaise with Ministry of Lands officials to grab land.**

Councilors and members of parliament promise their supporters jobs if

they ‘help’ them win elections. In the event that the unemployed youths have nothing to do to earn a living, their energy is usually directed to political thuggery with the hope of getting jobs when their candidates win.

Apart from jobs, some political thugs get rent money in their respective low class dwellings. This serves to subsidise their expenditure on basic needs and makes life in Nairobi a little more manageable for them.



## Effects of political violence

Political violence has caused adverse effects on people's lives and institutions.

In the first place, the insecurity problem it creates leads to closure of business, schools and other educational institutions. This is because the thugs take advantage of any little opportunity of lawlessness to loot property and to kill or maim. Some also take advantage of the situation to rape women.

In Langata and Dondora, political violence or possibility of its occurrence does lead to emigration especially during elections. The apprehensive residents relocate to surrounding fairly peaceful or secure neighborhoods until the election results are announced and peace restored. Within the Central Business District of Nairobi, political violence especially between the students and the law enforcing agents always leads to both damage and looting of property, especially light consumer goods. Political violence has led to injuries and death of the perpetrators, their opponents or just innocent victims. It has also led to the creation of vigilante groups to perform the duty of community police especially during election times. These people have to be paid and sustained by the residents themselves hence an additional burden to the people.

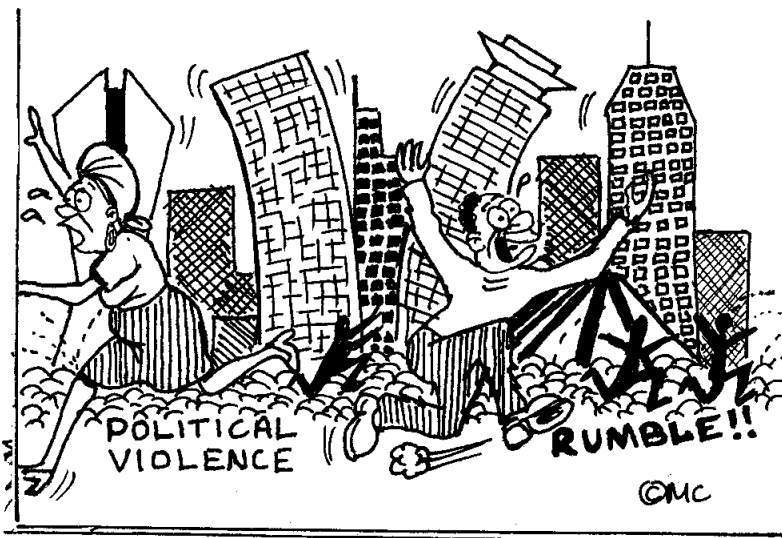
In Kangemi and Dondora, incidents of political violence have seriously affected the operation of public service motor vehicles particularly because of fear of being vandalized or set ablaze. The residents of the affected areas therefore, find it extremely difficult to undertake their daily assignments



because of the hitch caused by interrupted transportation system.

### **State and public response to political violence**

The State response in the containment of political violence is generally poor. The State responds very slowly or ineffectively when the parties involved in the conflict are in the Opposition and KANU has no stakes in the conflict. But



when KANU politicians are involved or whenever the State has an interest, it moves in fast and with a partisan attitude, which is always disposed towards the State and Kanu agents.

In certain instances, the police move in with unnecessary violence and

**Political violence causes serious adverse effects on people's lives.**

innocent people are either arrested or injured. The State does not therefore, do advance investigation to establish facts surrounding the outbreak of political violence whenever and wherever it breaks, respondents of the study said.

The police in Nairobi seem to know the perpetrators well and the sponsors of political violence but they are reluctant to arrest them either because of bribery, inadequate evidence to link them to the offence or their connections with people in high places. This further complicates the containment of political violence by the State especially where it appears to



be the chief sponsor. One militia called JLM is widely believed to be a State- sustained militia operation in Nairobi.

In certain instances the perpetrators of political violence have more advanced weapons than the police. This forces the police to defend themselves or at best to sit and watch as the opponents fight it out.

However, there are certain instances where the State response has been fair as in the containment of clashes between the Mungiki and the Kamjeshi gang in Dandora over the control of matatu business. Although the conflict is not yet fully resolved, the police have so far managed to restore law and order in the area.

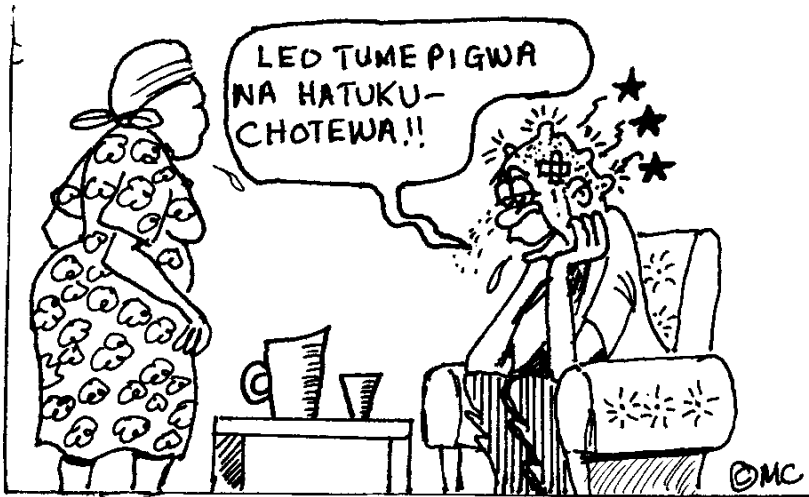
The public attitude towards political violence in Nairobi is negative. This can be explained by the fact that political violence affects directly or indirectly hundreds of Nairobi residents and only benefits the sponsor and a few perpetrators. As already stated, it opens a wide vacuum for lawlessness which the perpetrators take advantage of to kill, loot, injure and commit all manner of offences.

In the event of an outbreak of political violence most of the residents would migrate from the affected areas if it is a permanent or long lasting conflict. However, when it is for a short period, they would watch from a distance. Political violence is therefore a game for a few people, mostly frustrated youths and their sponsors .

There are some plans underway to perpetrate political violence in future and with specific reference to 2002 general elections.



The Jeshi la Mzee is said to be aggressively recruiting youths in Kangemi, while the 42 brothers and Msumbiji wing are doing the same in Langata and so is Kamjeshi in Embakasi. All these



Political violence has led to injuries and death of the perpetrators, their opponents or just innocent victims.

aggressive recruitments are geared towards winning elections or containing rival forces during the 2002 general elections. The Mungiki group with no central base in Nairobi but with branches all out the eight constituencies in Nairobi is also aggressively recruiting

youths into its social economic, cultural and political agenda.

At the University of Nairobi, tens of the expelled and suspended students are regrouping to pursue their case against the administration and the government for disallowing them to continue with their education, which is a fundamental human right. They are said to be organising a nationwide strike, which could disorganize the university education process especially in the run-up to the 2002 general elections. This could add up to the pathetic situation of lawlessness in Nairobi.

At the ward level, there are unconfirmed rumours that the dominant ethnic communities could begin a conflict any time before 2002 elections to flush out members of other ethnic groups who may not vote for their kinsmen. Particularly affected in this regard is Kibera where the Luo are the majority.



## The future of political violence in Nairobi

The political issues, which may generate tension and possible eruption of political violence in the coming years, vary from constituency to constituency. In all of the three constituencies, however, the succession issue seems to be generating a lot of fear, suspicion and tension.

As the highest level, there is mixed fear and suspicion that the incumbent president may refuse to relinquish power at the expiry of his second term. President Moi's refusal to relinquish power could possibly spark off discontentment among Kenyans especially those in the opposition hence an outbreak of lawlessness and disorder.

The second issue which is a potential issue of suspicion is who and which political party will form the government after President Moi's. In Embakasi which is predominantly DP the majority of the respondents support the presidency of Mwai Kibaki, while Langata which is predominantly NDP there is wide support and expectation that Raila Odinga will become the president. In Westlands constituency, there is a popular expectation of continued KANU win either with Moi himself going for the third term or an appointee of his in the party. In one way or another, and to the extent that not all parties can form the government at the same time, the presidential succession issue is highly expected to generate conflicts.

The struggle to win or retain both the civic and parliamentary seats in Langata, Embakasi and Westlands will be another source of conflicts. The conflicts might begin at individual party level during the nomination of

candidates and extend to conflicts between parties during the elections period. There are fears that in Embakasi, Langata and Kibera where political thugs have been a feature before will re-emerge in Elections 2002. That scenario might be played both at constituency and ward level. In the wake of increasing insecurity problems in the country and a weak



Electoral Commission to handle electoral offences, the year 2002 general elections is a rich source of violence in Kenya.

The problem of land or the struggle over irregular land allocation between the political and government forces is another potential

source of violence especially in Embakasi where it has become almost a permanent problem. Kangemi area of Westlands is equally affected in this regard but to a lesser degree.

Other potential sources of conflict are likely to arise from clashes between militia groups with their bases in different parts of Nairobi in their struggle over supremacy. This survey discovered the presence of seven militia groups in the city - Kamjesh, Jeshi la mzee, Bagdad boys, Mungiki, 42 brothers, Mzumbiji Youth and the Comrades Group, the later based at the University of Nairobi.

As the country heads for the next general election, there are possibilities that ethnic clashes will re-emerge. Ethnic suspicion and personal rivalry especially among those who have strong interests in the 2002 general elections might cause violence



## **Conclusion**

The study confirms the presence of the sponsors and perpetrators of political violence in Nairobi. It also brings to the fore an emerging trend within the Kenyan political culture in which use of political violence is quickly becoming popular and an inevitable strategy in winning political contests and consolidating power.

Nothing less could have been expected especially in a weak and vulnerable economy where nothing rewards other than political power. The heavy investments of money by the civic, parliamentary, presidential contestants and members of the business community with specific interests in political violence among a poor, desperate and unemployed urban population has made political violence one of the most rewarding business in Nairobi. The demand for political violence is high among the sponsors and the supply is overwhelming from the perpetrators' side.

Political violence has undergone some historical development from the pre-independence period and has transformed itself to suit the process of both the sponsor and perpetrators. Presently,

it has social economic and political causes which need to be investigated and understood.

One reason why political violence has found its place within the Kenyan political culture is its frequent use by the State to contain individuals and parties opposed to it, or its general reluctance to contain it. This development throws the challenge to members of the civic society to think on a strategy, which would help contain the problem.

When all is said and done, political violence poses a great challenge to the democratization process and national integration project, which is yet to be achieved. Presently, many people live in fear that the 2002 general elections would be violent.

Political violence is more challenging today than it was before. If it erupts in Nairobi, it will most likely spread to other parts of the country. Kenya could be torn apart by these seemingly small and ignored incidents of political violence in Nairobi. The challenge before Kenyan and the international community is to address this phenomenon today.

## Notes