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Kenya

# Renewed protests in Kenya

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**One year after the major demonstrations against the budget, Kenyan youths are taking to the streets again, despite increased repression.**

Once again, young Kenyans are demonstrating in memory of the sixty people murdered by the police a year ago during protests against the draft budget. At that time, William Ruto, the President of Kenya, had created a multitude of taxes affecting the working classes in response to the IMF's demands for debt repayment.

## The WanTam movement

Called by civil society organisations and widely relayed by social networks, the 'Maandamano' protests on Wednesday 25 June took place in major cities across the country. Tens of thousands of demonstrators, mainly young people, were quick to chant slogans against Ruto, who is preparing for a second term as president. Some demanded the president's resignation, while others wrote on makeshift placards 'WanTam', the popular expression for 'one term'.

Since his election in 2022, Ruto had been able to create an illusion during his election campaign by condemning police violence, promising to fight poverty and setting himself up as the candidate of precarious youth. Once elected, Ruto showed his true colours. He privatised dozens of national companies, strengthened his clientelist network and used violence like his predecessors.

The police violently repressed the demonstration. Initial estimates by Amnesty International Kenya put the death toll at sixteen. The feminist association Usikimye denounced organised sexual violence against women, with a dozen rapes by thugs paid by the government.

## Terrorizing the population

This police violence is omnipresent. It takes the form of enforced disappearances, which often end in the death of those kidnapped. Hundreds of thousands of Kenyans have seen this violence on social networks. During a demonstration, a police officer shot a young, peaceful street vendor at point-blank range. There is also the case of Albert Ojwang, a young teacher who was imprisoned and tortured to death for criticising a senior police officer.

Many Kenyans find themselves in police custody during roadblocks, a method used by the police to extort money in exchange for their release.

This repression is the result of political will. Under Ruto, the number of kidnappings has quadrupled. The signal of three television channels, NTV, KTN and K24, was cut off because they had exceeded the ban on live coverage of the demonstrations. He did not hesitate to hand over to Uganda Kizza Besigye, one of Museveni's main opponents, who is now languishing in prison in appalling conditions.

But this in no way prevents Macron from organising, in partnership with Ruto, the next Africa-France summit in Nairobi in 2026.

PS:

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