



Kenya| Safari, deaths, kidnappings

Kenya in the summer of last year: hundreds of thousands take to the streets. All over Kenya, not just in the capital Nairobi. The protests were particularly strong in the CBD, the financial district. The police apparently not only fired tear gas pistols, but also live rounds. Brutal violence against the - in their overwhelming numbers - peaceful protesters, mainly young people. Shots against freedom and unsolved (political) kidnappings - in a country where we go on holiday and on safari.

At least 39 demonstrators dead

At least 39 protesters were killed in Kenya by the end of 2024. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) has given this figure for the period between 18 June and 1 July 2024. The [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) recorded 42 deaths from 18 June to mid-July 2024. [Human Rights Watch](#) documented at least 73 deaths by the end of July. There are indications that the number of fatalities could be higher due to unreported cases.

Since the protests in June, opposition members have been kidnapped time and again. Human rights groups speak of 82 abductions. 29 people are still missing. Why don't we actually hear, read or see anything about this in Germany?

The planned tax law in Kenya

How did the protests last summer come about in the first place? People were fed up with having to pay more and more for the little food they had. Because the planned tax increases would have

The poor in particular were affected. And there are still far too many of them in the "up-and-coming country in East Africa". The German Development Ministry describes it as the "third largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa". However, hardly any of this reaches the vast majority of people.

Kenya ... "has a dynamic private economy, low dependence on commodity exports, a growing middle class and an increasingly productive agricultural sector. In recent years, the Kenyan economy has grown by five to six per cent annually. Following a slump in economic output in the wake of the coronavirus crisis in 2020 (minus 0.3 per cent), 2021 saw a significant upturn with growth of 7.5 per cent. The World Bank expects growth rates of around five per cent for 2023 and 2024."

- German Development Ministry, May 2023

The so-called "Finance Bill" was supposed to inject money into the country's ailing budget. In the end, however, the mass demonstrations washed the Finance Bill into the orcus. Kenya's President William Ruto had to pay tribute to the storm of indignation. The anger of many in Kenya had turned against him personally. This also had to do with the fact that he - like many of his predecessors - had promised the citizens too much.

It should, of course, get better. Ruto wanted to powerfully combat the pathological corruption in Kenya. He wanted to give people good prospects for education, training and quality of life. He wanted to do everything he could to ensure that people would be better off in the future than when he took office. It cannot even be said that he did not fulfil any of his promises. However, the overwhelming majority of citizens obviously have a different impression. Ruto's poll results are likely to be even lower than those of the chancellor in this country.

"There will no more slums in Kenya"

The President of Kenya likes to present himself as visionary. He has repeatedly spoken of the fact that there is no

"Informal settlements" - i.e. no more slums - will no longer exist in Kenya. He mentions various years in which this should be achieved. However, the reality still looks horrific in many cases.

Around 200,000 to 250,000 people live in Korogocho, the third largest slum in Kenya's capital. On one and a half square kilometres. Here, 60% of the children go to the rubbish tip "Dandora" work because the parents cannot earn enough money to pay for school or feed their children. Even 12- or 13-year-olds look for food there. One of them can be seen in the article photo. Without organisations like the [Ayiera Initiative in Korogocho](#), things would be even worse for thousands of slum dwellers. The initiative is supported from Germany by the organisation ["Zukunft für Kinder in Slums e.V."](#) (Future for Children in Slums), among others.

Kenya: protests, deaths, kidnappings

The fact that poverty in large parts of the world is hardly ever reported on is nothing new. After all, so the common argument goes, it is "a completely different world". What a mistake!

References to the fact that it's the same world - only somewhere else - are often simply parried with a trivial "That's right, actually." parried.

The at least 39 people who died in or as a result of the unrest play just as little a role in the media in this country. Certainly, they were mentioned at the height of the protests. But that was it. What is not mentioned at all in the German media: Dozens of kidnappings of human rights activists, students or ordinary citizens in Kenya. This has been going on for months. Every day Middle East, Ukraine, Trump. Over and over again. There seems to be no more room for our neighbouring continent.

A senator is arrested and our media remain silent

In its report on the unrest in Kenya in the summer of 2024, the [Friedrich Ebert Foundation](#) quotes a communications expert: "The measures taken by his government further increase the dissatisfaction and hardship of ordinary citizens," he says. He was also arrested by the police for his involvement in the protests. Just like Senator Okiya Omtatah from the province of Busia, on the border with Rwanda and Lake Victoria, a few days ago at the end of December. You won't find this kind of information in our media. Why not?

The best newspaper in East Africa, the [NATION](#), has been asking for weeks about the abductees in Kenya. In page-long reports and commentaries, it has been calling for clarification on a daily basis. The same goes for countless radio and television stations, including [Citizen TV](#) and the [STAR](#) newspaper - not to mention social media. The president's response: [Democracy also has its limits](#) when, for example, lies or bending the truth on social media. But the one has nothing to do with the other. And a truly presidential answer to the questions of his people would probably look different. What's more, by doing so he is exacerbating Kenyans' rejection of his presidency - to a certain extent through his own efforts.

"Kenya is not a stable democracy"

Nicknames are common in [Africa](#), even in Kenya. Presumably everyone has one. President Ruto has now been given a Christian one. However, it is anything but friendly. His opponents call him "Zakayo". In Swahili, it stands for Zacchaeus, and he was not exactly a squeamish tax collector. Nicknames alone are no longer enough for many people when they criticise Ruto. In October last year, the [Handesblatt](#) quoted the activist Njeri Mwangi.

"We live in a country where a few enrich themselves while millions of people cannot even afford a meal a day or have access to clean drinking water. It is a lie that Kenya is a stable democracy." ... "Even if it has become quiet on the streets, it is bubbling under the surface."

Human rights activist Njeri Mwangi, Chairwoman of the Centre for Social Justice. The organisation looks after the rights of residents in the Mathare slum.

Responsibility for reporting on Kenya

Nobody expects the smallest newspaper or the latest media start-up to report extensively on what is happening in Kenya. You have to expect this from major newspapers such as FAZ, SPIEGEL, Die Zeit or Süddeutsche Zeitung. Especially from

the public broadcasters, which the author of this article considers indispensable. However, if colourful magazines, exaggerated pop booms or never-ending repetitions of kitsch romances are more important than what is happening in Kenya, something is rotten in the state.

The reporting areas of the public broadcasters' correspondents are far too large - even in Africa. The work of our colleagues under these conditions cannot overestimated. Nevertheless, ARD, ZDF and Deutsche Welle also have a special responsibility for Kenya. After all, everything that happens there can and will have an impact on us. It already has.

In Kenya, around 75% of the population is under the age of 25. This corresponds to a young population of 32.8 million. The migration agreement recently signed between Germany and Kenya enables up to 250,000 Kenyans to work in Germany. The aim of the agreement is to alleviate the shortage of skilled labour in Germany and at the same time combat the high youth unemployment rate in Kenya. Nevertheless, we cannot simply remain indifferent to the "remaining" 32.5 million Kenyans. Nor can we be indifferent to democracy in Kenya.

<https://www.thomasschwarzbonn.de/2025/01/kenia-safari-tote-entfuhrungen/>