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By George F. Ward

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A Kenya Defence Forces tank moves toward the Garissa University College, in Garissa, Kenya, Thursday, April 2, 2015. (Source: AP Photo.)

Ambassador (ret.) George F. Ward is editor of Africa Watch and a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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By Dr. Janette Yarwood

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The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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"The Error of Fighting Terror with Terror"

That is the provocative title of the KNCHR's report, which is couched in direct language. The report, which is still marked as preliminary, documents 120 cases of egregious human rights violations, including 25 extra-judicial killings and 81 enforced disappearances. The vast majority of these alleged abuses occurred since December 2013, with a significant upward spike since the attacks on the Garissa University College in April 2015.

The KNCHR's findings include the following:

> . . . these violations are widespread, systematic, and well-coordinated and include but are not limited to arbitrary arrests, extortion, illegal detention, torture, killings, and disappearances. KNCHR has heard multiple narratives of suspects being rounded up and detained for periods ranging from a few hours to many days in extremely overcrowded and inhumane and degrading conditions. Many have been tortured while in detention, sustaining physical injuries and psychological harm as a result. The torture methods include beatings, waterboarding, electric shocks, genital mutilation, exposure to extreme cold or heat, hanging on trees, mock executions, and exposure to stinging by ants in the wild, denial of sleep and food.

The KNCHR concluded its report with a series of recommendations for actions by individuals and entities in the Kenyan government and security forces, beginning with President Uruhu Kenyatta, who was urged to "acknowledge and condemn the abuses by security agencies and call upon them to ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights in the fight against terrorism. [President Kenyatta] should issue an official apology to the survivors and families of victims of the abuses."

So Far, Little Public Attention

The KNCHR report emerged little more than a week before the second anniversary of the terrorist attack on Nairobi's Westgate mall in September 2013 and thus might have been expected to receive significant attention. In fact, it has received little notice. There has been only modest coverage of the report in the Kenyan press. The Facebook page of the KNCHR announced the release of the report, but that posting received no comment and only two "likes" from Kenyan citizens. President Kenyatta's Twitter account carried no mention of the report as of September 21, 2015.

Kenyan public sensitivity to the internal terrorist threat tends, perhaps understandably, to rise sharply whenever a high-profile incident occurs and then to fall off rapidly. When concerns about internal security are high, Kenyans tend to view the deployment of the KDF in Somalia as detracting from the government's ability to protect citizens at home. At other times, the KDF deployment abroad is viewed more positively, often through a patriotic lens. For example, a survey undertaken by Ipsos Public Affairs, a leading public opinion survey firm in Kenya, found that the proportion of respondents that advocated withdrawing Kenyan troops from Somalia to defend the Kenyan border increased about 10 percent around the time of the Garissa University College tragedy, from 44 percent in the days before the April 2 attack to 48 percent after April 2. At that time, a large majority of respondents advocated bringing the troops home. In contrast, an Ipsos survey conducted only three months later and released in September revealed that 57 percent of Kenyans supported the continued deployment of the KDF in Somalia.

Government Remains Focused on a Military Solution

Given the existing climate of public opinion, in which the cost of living and public corruption are more active concerns than terrorism, President Kenyatta and his government may well believe that they have considerable freedom of action with regard to the internal al-Shabaab threat. In recent weeks, the KDF launched an operation aimed at ousting al-Shabaab fighters from sanctuaries in the Boni Forest, which lies along the border with Somalia. Before the military offensive, the government issued an order to inhabitants of the area to leave. According to one report, 3,000 people followed the order but, despite assurances by the government, have received little or no assistance in their new locations.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that enhanced security in Kenya's cities and towns and aggressive operations against al-Shabaab are two elements necessary to defeat the terrorist threat. That said, unless those activities are accompanied by a program of reconciliation with Kenya's significant Somali minority, the need for which has previously been highlighted in *Africa Watch*, it is likely that new recruits will continue to be available to fill gaps in al-Shabaab's ranks. A constructive response by the government of President Uruhu Kenyatta to the KNCHR report could be a step in the right direction.

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Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are scheduled to hold elections in October 2015 amid mounting political tensions. Both countries have experienced conflicts related to voter-registration processes being perceived as unfair or biased and to rivalries between political parties and contestants.

Ivorian President, Alassane Ouattara, waves at media after his meeting with his French counterpart, Francois Hollande, at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, Tuesday, June 16, 2015. He is opposed in the upcoming presidential elections by several factions within Côte d'Ivoire. (Source: AP Photo/Jacques Brinon.)

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire is scheduled to hold presidential elections on October 25. The tensions that have arisen there are cause for concern given the 2010–2011 post-election civil conflict in which 3,000 people died when incumbent Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down. In August 2015, the opposition Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) said it would boycott the election because political and security conditions were not conducive for a peaceful, transparent, and credible poll. The FPI is threatening to obstruct the election and hold street protests, claiming that the Electoral Commission (CEI) lacks independence, that there was a flawed registration process, and that the electoral register requires updating. In addition, two new opposition coalitions have emerged to contest President Alassane Ouattara's ruling Rally of Republicans (RDR).
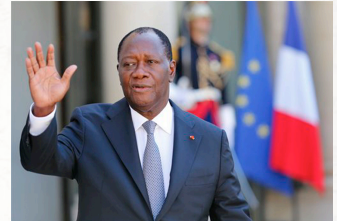
In May, disgruntled elements from the FPI and Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) joined forces with other influential politicians to form the National Coalition for Change (CNC). Another FPI faction headed by Pascal Affi N'Guessan formed the Alliance of Democratic Forces (AFD). Both alliances assert that election preparations favor Ouattara. They claim that millions of people will be prevented from voting because they were unable to register. They have also claimed that the national electoral commission is biased toward the government.

On September 15, the CNC accused the government of detaining 16 of its supporters for participating in demonstrations opposing President Ouattara's candidacy in the upcoming presidential vote. The arrests could raise tensions ahead of next month's election, said coalition spokesman Cesar Etou. In recent weeks, the CNC also urged its supporters to take to the streets in protest to push for talks with the government on the presidential poll. Demonstrations have already led to clashes in several parts of the country. The ruling RDR spokesman Joel N'guessan said, "the opposition's single strategy is to cause mayhem in order to prevent the holding of the forthcoming elections."

Guinea

Guinea only returned to civilian rule in 2010 following a 2008 coup after long-time President Lansana Conte died. The country held its first election in 2010—voting in Alpha Conde as a president in what international observers deemed a valid ballot. In 2013, about 100 people died and more were injured during electoral unrest.

Tension is building around the presidential poll scheduled for October 11 and the local elections planned for early next year. The latter polls were originally scheduled for 2014 but were canceled by the government because of the Ebola epidemic. The opposition—principally Cellou Dalein Diallo's Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) and Sidya Touré's Union of

Republican Forces—has suggested that President Alpha Conde will use the delay to manipulate the election. They claim that Guinea's local authorities are completely under the president's control and that he wants them to stay in power to help rig the presidential vote. The opposition has held several protests since April over the election calendar. These turned violent, leaving several dead and dozens injured. The trigger for the opposition's massive protests came at the end of March when the independent electoral commission (CENI) announced that local elections would be held in early 2016.

The main problem, according to Aboubacar Sylla, spokesman of the opposition alliance and chairman of the opposition party Union of the Forces for Change (UFC), is that Guinea's institutions are all under the thumb of the president: "He has systematically placed people close to himself at the top of important institutions. Parliament simply waves through all the president's drafts for new legislation, just like the post delivering letters."

The controversy goes well beyond the electoral calendar. The opposition has also challenged the electoral registry, the map of constituencies, the composition and functioning of the electoral commission, the conditions for diaspora voting, neutrality of prefects and governors, and the constitutional court. Coupled with this, according to Vincent Foucher, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, the results of the 2013 legislative elections indicate that voting often splits on ethnic lines. Diallo's UFDG is primarily supported by the Fulani; the Malinké ethnic group mostly support President Condé's Rally of the People of Guinea (RPG) Rainbow.

Conclusion

A 2012 International Peace Institute report notes that election-related violence can be triggered by electoral shortcomings such as severely flawed voter lists, the misuse of incumbency, a lack of transparency, or actual or perceived bias of election officials. While these technical shortcomings are not the fundamental cause of violence, they can act as triggers that ignite violence when tied to deeper rooted social, economic, or political tensions. In Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, the international community should work with the government, the opposition, and international partners to build a minimum of consensus on electoral arrangements to reduce the risk of violence before, during, or after the voting. Pre-electoral conflict can be addressed by transparent registration, codes of conduct for political parties, and voter/civic education programs for voters and candidates. Election monitoring can enhance the credibility and legitimacy of elections, including the media's ability to report on all aspects of campaigning and election-related activities and events. Finally, a dispute mechanism must be in place for addressing grievances.

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