

**New Report: The Risk of Genocide in Kenya 2012** The Sentinel Project for Genocide Prevention 27 November 2012 The Sentinel Project for Genocide Prevention has conducted a comprehensive assessment of the risk of genocide in Kenya and found the risk to be high. Analysis of various aspects of Kenyan society, including political, social, cultural, and economic characteristics, indicates that many factors which have been identified as potential precursors to genocide are present in Kenya. This does not indicate that genocide is inevitable in Kenya, only that there is sufficient risk to warrant the monitoring of events there and the implementation of preventive measures aimed at reducing that risk.

Perhaps the most significant contributing factors to Kenya's high risk of genocide are the strained and rivalry-prone social and cultural relationships between tribes, and the recent violent conflict in the aftermath of the December 2007 national elections. The country's history is one of ethnic and political division, polarization and competition, which has largely contributed to a political and social order that promotes ethnocentrism and inter-tribal antagonism. This has led to violence in the past, as it did in late 2007 and early 2008 when the disputed election results led to mass violence between groups of political supporters, divided largely along ethnic lines, which killed as many as 1,500 people and displaced hundreds of thousands.

The political and institutional responses to that violence may serve to mitigate Kenya's risk of genocide. In 2008, the two primary presidential contenders, President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, agreed to share power in a coalition government. The agreement limited presidential authority primarily through the creation of a prime minister, a position that Odinga assumed while Kibaki remained president. In 2010 Kenya voted in favour of a new constitution that further decentralises power, both through the creation of a Senate as the second chamber of the legislature, and through the establishment of local counties and governors to whom some of the president's executive powers were shifted. These developments seem to put Kenya on a positive trajectory toward democracy, limited government, and greater political representation and participation. But concerns remain about the government's commitment to the reforms, the extent of their effects on Kenyan society and whether these changes may actually serve to exacerbate existing inter-tribal tensions.

The social and political divisions in Kenya are further complicated by the country's economic situation. Poverty is rampant, unemployment is high, and economic inequality is significant and tends to correspond to ethnic divisions, leading to widespread competition for limited jobs and resources that creates resentment amongst those who are unhappy with the outcome. Kenya's bleak economic outlook contributes to a high risk of genocide particularly when seen in light of its young population. More than 40 per cent of the country's residents are below the age of 15, and three-quarters of the population falls between the ages of 15 and 29 years. When prospects for future employment, education or high social stature are so meagre, young people are more easily recruited into militias and gangs that offer prosperity, security, and a sense of purpose, often in the form of violent or criminal acts against a scapegoat group, like a rival tribe. This sort of recruitment becomes more and more likely when young people comprise such a large

proportion of the country's population.

The next national election is quickly approaching in March 2013, and it will be a test for those reforms made in the aftermath of the post-election violence of 2007-2008. There are reports that tribal militias are engaged in an arms race in preparation for the elections, whether out of feelings of injustice, a sense of revenge, or anticipated self defence and a mistrust of or lack of faith in state security forces. For these and other reasons the 2013 election has the potential to explode into mass violence on a scale much greater than that in 2007-2008, and given the presence and combination of other structural indicators and risk factors, such violence may escalate into genocide.

This risk assessment represents the first step in the genocide early warning, risk reduction, and prevention process. The Sentinel Project's next steps will include the following:

- Establishment of partnerships with civil society organizations working in Kenya to facilitate information sharing;
- Monitoring of ongoing events to identify genocidal processes that may be taking place;
- Assessments of whether any prominent Kenyan organizations – either state or non-state – or individuals harbour genocidal intent;
- Assessments of vulnerability to determine which – if any – ethnic groups in Kenya are the most likely to be targeted for genocide;
- Release of periodic threat assessments summarizing the information relevant to the above points; and
- Development and articulation of recommended preventive measures to be implemented by civil society and policy makers. (...)

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