

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

## Introduction

### Focus

Kenya's recent presidential election resulted in some of the worst violence in the country's history. This *News in Review* module examines the causes of the conflict and the agreement that ended it. We discuss many of the keys to the conflict in Kenya's recent history and tribal rivalries.

### Definition

*Tribalism* generally refers to the identification of people with their tribe rather than their nation as a whole. In extreme cases tribalism can lead to rivalry, national strife, and civil war.

### Update

As the Kenyan crisis was apparently winding down, yet another election crisis erupted in the Africa nation of Zimbabwe where March election results were disputed and political violence loomed on the horizon.

The 2007 Kenyan presidential election should have been a high point in the republic's history. Described by the respected journal *The Economist* (December 22, 2007) as "a haven of stability and prosperity in eastern Africa," Kenya was expected to hold an election that would be an example to all of Africa. "If a country as complex and poor as Kenya can hold genuine elections without civil strife, then any country in Africa can. This is a chance to set an example." Unfortunately, the resulting election was not what *The Economist*—or most outside observers—expected.

The election was predicted to be extremely close. Opinion polls showed a very small lead for Raila Odinga, the leader of Kenya's main opposition party. Odinga more than once alleged that the ruling party, led by President Mwai Kibaki, had plans in place to rig the vote. He even claimed to have letters and videotapes proving his allegations.

Election day itself was almost anticlimactic. The vote was orderly, and no major disruptions were reported. The count, however, was extremely slow. Preliminary results indicated that Odinga was the likely winner.

The vote was held on December 27, 2007, but it was December 30 before the official announcement was made: Kibaki defeated Odinga by less than two per cent of the vote. Odinga, supported by outside observers from the European Union, was quick to declare that widespread fraud had cost him the election.

### Ethnic Violence

The rivalry between Kibaki and Odinga is complicated by the fact that they are members of two different tribes. Kibaki,

a Kikuyu, is a member of a tribe that considers itself Kenya's ruling elite. Odinga, a Luo, belongs to a tribe that has long resented the political and economic success of the Kikuyu. Kibaki's election in 2002 had returned the Kikuyu to power after a period of 24 years.

Well before the 2007 election, *The Economist* (June 9, 2007), described tribalism as "the motor of politics in Kenya," and declared that it was "as potent and prevalent as ever." (We examine the role of tribalism later in this guide.) Nonetheless, many observers felt that there were definite signs of improvement in Kenya. While the Kikuyu and the Luo might be adversaries, all Kenyans seemed to be benefiting from improved social and economic conditions.

It took only 15 minutes from when the official result was announced for violence to erupt in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya's capital. Members of the Kikuyu were the targets. Anti-Kikuyu violence soon spread to many parts of the country. In all, more than 1 000 people died, and 600 000 were displaced.

The Kenyan election violence was especially dispiriting to other Africans who had hoped for evidence that multiparty elections could be held peacefully and that tribalism could become a thing of the past. Many hoped that the ethnic cleansing that took place in Rwanda in 1994 would serve as an example that would prevent future occurrences. The Kenyan violence, while hardly on that scale, proved that the old ways were not dead.

### Resolution?

On the other hand, both sides, with the assistance of outside mediation, did come together and negotiate a

**Quote**

*The Economist*  
(June 9, 2007)  
doesn't mince words in assigning blame for the mess Kenya finds itself in. "The answer is misguided economic policies, mismanagement, poor maintenance, sloppiness, tribalism, and corruption. This litany of failings is almost entirely the fault of Kenyans themselves: the politicians they have allowed to rule over them and rip them off; the civil servants and road builders (some of them foreign) who have skimmed off contracts or simply not bothered to do the job; and the dishonesty, venality, and fatalism that have gripped society at large."

**Update**

The fragile compromise that seemed to end the violence in Kenya appeared to be breaking down by early April, when the Odinga opposition broke off negotiations with the Kibaki government. Violence erupted on the streets again.

settlement. The result was a power-sharing arrangement where both men could influence the future political and economic development of the country.

One can only hope they can come together to deal with the challenges. In addition to the tribalism at the root of the recent violence, the country faces a huge number of economic and social problems. These include a population explosion, from eight million at independence (1963) to almost 37 million today. Six per cent of that population suffers from HIV/AIDS. Nairobi, the capital, is one of the world's

fastest-growing cities; at the heart of it is a slum that houses anywhere from 600 000 to 1.2 million people. Crime is increasing dramatically. Fifty per cent of the population lives below the poverty level. Infrastructure is collapsing, and it is Kenya's roads that best demonstrate this; many of the main roads between cities have so many potholes and craters that traffic can move no faster than 15 kilometres per hour.

Kibaki, Odinga, and the Kenyan National Assembly have their work cut out for them.

**For Discussion**

One of Kenya's greatest political problems is that the members of each tribe, as they take power, seem to feel it entitles them to help themselves to much of the public purse. The result has been the numerous problems listed at the end of this introduction. What measures might a power-sharing government under Kibaki and Odinga take in order to reverse this corrupt practice? How likely are they to make a serious attempt to do so? Is there any useful role for Canada in this situation? Explain.

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

## *Video Review*

### Quote

"The postcard Kenya that everyone sees with elephants and nice sunsets is gone. We now have to deal with the reality of Kenya, which is the majority of people who live in slums with no toilets and have a very hard life." — Kenyan anti-corruption activist John Githongo (*Toronto Star*, February 9, 2008)

Respond to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is the name of Kenya's president who ran for re-election in 2007?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who was his main opponent, the man who claimed he was the real winner?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. For many observers, the Kenyan violence brought to mind previous tribal violence in another African country. What was that country? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did the United States react to the announced Kenyan election results?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. According to a statement by the head of Kenya's election commission, who really won the presidential election? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which well-known diplomat was finally able to bring both sides together to discuss a potential agreement? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many Kenyans died in the first month of violence? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many Kenyan children are believed to have been lost or orphaned? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Kenya supplies more of one agricultural product to Europe than does any other country. What is that product? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many Kenyans work in the country's tourist industry? \_\_\_\_\_
11. By the end of February 2008, Kenya's presidential election rivals had agreed to two major deals to end the conflict. What were they?
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
12. What lessons might other African nations take from the recent crisis in Kenya?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Why might this matter be of interest to countries far beyond the African continent?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

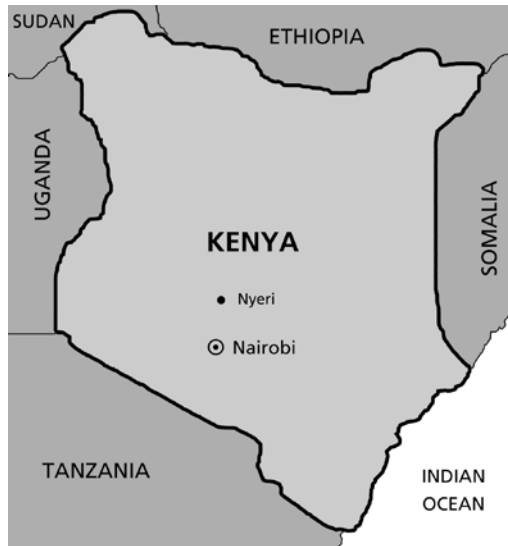
## Profile

### Further Research

Good background information on Kenya is available at Infoplease at [www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107678.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107678.html), and at the (U.S.) Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook* at [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html). The official Web site of the Government of Kenya is [www.kenya.go.ke](http://www.kenya.go.ke).

### Did you know...

A useful statistical comparison can be made with Canada, with its population of 33 390 000. The median age of Canadians is 39.1, and the population is growing at less than one per cent per year. Canada's infant mortality rate is 4.63 per 1 000 live births. Canadians have a life expectancy of 80.34 years. About 56 000 Canadians are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS.



Kenya is an East African country bordering on the Indian Ocean, with Somalia to the east and Tanzania to the south. Its other neighbours are Ethiopia on its north, Sudan on the northwest, and Uganda to the west. Its capital and largest city is Nairobi, with a population of about 2.5 million.

### Population

- Kenya's population is estimated (July 2007) at 36 913 721.
- The median age of the Kenyan population is 18.6 years. 42.1 per cent of the population is 0-14 years of age; 55.2 per cent is 15-64; only 2.6 per cent is 65 or over.
- Kenya's population is growing at a rate of about 2.8 per cent per year.
- The infant mortality rate is high – 57.44 deaths per 1 000 live births.
- The current life expectancy for Kenyans is 55.31 years.
- HIV/AIDS is an important factor in the Kenyan mortality rate. Over six per cent of the population—1.2 million people—is believed to be living with HIV/AIDS.
- The bulk of the Kenyan population consists of members of a number of

African tribes. The largest are the Kikuyu (22 per cent), the Luhya (14 per cent), the Luo (13 per cent), the Kalenjin (12 per cent), and the Kamba (11 per cent). Only about one per cent of the population is non-African.

- A large majority of the population is Christian—about 78 per cent. About 10 per cent is Muslim, and another 10 per cent practise traditional African religions.

### Economy

Until the recent election crisis, Kenya's economy was seen to be strengthening significantly after several years of stagnation.

- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP = total value of goods and services produced in a country) grew in 2007 at a rate of 6.3 per cent.
- The per capita GDP was \$1 600 in the same year.
- The GDP came from three major areas: agriculture (23.8 per cent), industry (16.7 per cent) and services (59.5 per cent)
- Industrial production is increasing at a rate of about 6.1 per cent per year.
- Kenya is a major producer of tea and coffee for the international market.
- Tourism is a \$6-billion industry for Kenya.
- One quarter of the labour force works in the industrial and service sectors; 75 per cent works in agriculture.

However, it is important to note that:

- Kenya's unemployment rate is 40 per cent.
- 50 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line.
- The inflation rate is about 9.3 per cent.

## **Government**

Kenya achieved independence from the United Kingdom on December 12, 1963, after several years of violent and non-violent struggle (see “Past Politics,” on page 37). The country is a constitutional republic, with a constitution that has been amended many times. A new constitution was proposed for adoption in 2005, but was defeated by popular vote. Negotiations following the recent election have guaranteed that another major rewrite will be necessary.

Currently, the president is both chief

of state and head of the government. However, a recent agreement has resulted in power-sharing between the president as chief of state and a prime minister as head of government. The latter will be responsible to the legislature.

The legislature consists of a National Assembly of 224 members. Of these, 210 are directly elected to five-year terms; 12 are appointed according to party vote totals; two others are ex-officio members (the attorney general and the speaker of the assembly).

## **Follow-up Activity**

Kenya has long been considered to be one of the more progressive African countries south of the Sahara. To see if this observation is valid, use the CIA *World Factbook* ([www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)) to compare the population and economic statistics given above with those of another African country. Each student should select a different country; comparisons can then be made to give a broad picture of Kenya’s place in the overall African demographic.

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

## *Past Politics*

### Further Research

Learn more about the Mau Mau uprising on Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mau\\_Mau\\_Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mau_Mau_Uprising); on About.com at [africanhistory.about.com/od/kenya/a/MauMauTimeline\\_2.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/kenya/a/MauMauTimeline_2.htm); and on Kenyalogy.com at [www.kenyalogy.com/eng/info/histo13.html](http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/info/histo13.html).

### Did you know . . .

Oginga Odinga is the father of 2007 presidential candidate and now prime minister Raila Odinga.

The history of modern Kenya began in 1895, when the greatest of all colonizers, the British, formed the British East Africa Protectorate in what is now Kenya and Uganda. White settlers were quick to move into the highlands, and, in 1920, the protectorate became the crown colony of Kenya, administered by a British governor.

### Independence

Kenya's independence movement began in 1944, with the foundation of the Kenyan African Union (KAU). Three years later Jomo Kenyatta, the man destined to become Kenya's first president, became the leader of the KAU.

Kenyatta was a member of the largest Kenyan tribe, the Kikuyu. In 1952 some of the Kikuyu formed a political group called the Mau Mau and began a series of violent attacks against white settlers. Kenyatta was regarded as their leader, and he was jailed by the British in 1953. However, the uprising continued, and Britain declared a state of emergency in Kenya.

By 1956 the British had had enough and moved some 50 000 troops into the country to end the rebellion. When the revolt was finally put down, about 12 000 Africans were dead and another 100 000 imprisoned. About 30 Europeans were killed.

Kenyatta remained in jail until 1959, when he was placed under house arrest. The British did not end the state of emergency until 1960, when they announced that they would prepare the country for independence.

That same year, Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga—with the blessing of the British—formed the Kenya African National Union (KANU). In 1961, Kenyatta was finally released from house

arrest. He was offered and accepted the presidency of KANU.

On December 12, 1963, Kenya became an independent country. Jomo Kenyatta was its first prime minister.

### Kenyatta's Presidency

Kenya was transformed into a republic in 1964, and Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, was elected its first president. He chose Oginga Odinga, a Luo tribesman, as his vice-president. Ideologically, the two leaders often disagreed (Odinga called himself a socialist). In 1966 Odinga left the KANU party and founded a new party, the KPU, or Kenyan People's Union, to contest the next election.

That election was to be held in 1969. Shortly before it a Kikuyu tribesman assassinated Tom Mboya, a Luo whom Kenyatta was believed to be grooming as his successor. Ethnic unrest followed. Kenyatta arrested Odinga and banned the KPU. Kenyatta easily won the election, as well as a subsequent one in 1974.

Despite the political problems, Kenyatta's presidency was a time of economic growth and positive change for Kenya. Kenyatta was beloved by the majority of Kenyans as the father of his country. He was also highly respected by foreign politicians—in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

### Daniel Arap Moi

Kenyatta died in office on August 22, 1978. He was succeeded by his vice-president, Daniel Arap Moi. Moi was considered a weak politician. However, the National Assembly was quick to endorse his presidency. As a member of the Kalenjin tribe, he did not represent any of the country's dominant ethnic groups.

### Further Research

For an authentic African look at the fight for Kenyan independence, go to Kenyaweb at [www.kenyaweb.com/history/struggle/index.html](http://www.kenyaweb.com/history/struggle/index.html). Also useful are Infoplease at [www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107678.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107678.html) and the BBC at [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1026884.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1026884.stm).

Moi quickly proved to be a despot, banning tribal societies and closing universities. In 1982 he and the KANU party declared Kenya a one-party state, effectively silencing most of his opposition.

By 1991, pressure from within Kenya and other countries accelerated to the point where the constitution was changed once again—to permit the registration of opposition parties. The biggest beneficiary was the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), one of whose leaders was Oginga Odinga. Moi, however, proved increasingly adept at playing one group off against another. In the 1992 election, the first multiparty election in Kenya's history, he won decisively once again.

By 1997, Moi had served four terms as president—all the constitution allowed. KANU, unwilling to give up power, announced a constitutional change to permit him one more term. He was duly re-elected in a vote that is believed to have been rigged.

During Moi's last period in office, Kenya was plagued by a series of environmental and civil disasters, leaving the economy reeling. His attempts to deal with corruption—a demand by the international community that provided Kenya with extensive financial assistance—proved to be ineffectual.

In 2001 problems reached a peak. Moi's solution was to form a coalition government. He included in it Raila Odinga, Oginga's son and now leader of the opposition, as minister of energy. But the country was restless. Millions of Kenyans had been affected by a lengthy drought. Furthermore, Moi's new anticorruption law failed to pass the National Assembly.

After 24 years in power, Moi could not run again. He chose Jomo Kenyatta's son Uhuru as his successor. But Uhuru Kenyatta had only one year of parliamentary experience and was easily defeated by Mwai Kibaki (31 per cent of the votes to 62 per cent). Kibaki remains president to this day.

### Analysis

1. Carefully indicate the progress made in Kenya since independence and outline the problems that still plague the young nation.
2. In your view, is the future of Kenya generally positive or negative? Explain your position.

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

## *The 2007 Election Crisis*

### Further Research

Raila Odinga has an official Web site at [www.raila07.com](http://www.raila07.com). Mwai Kibaki has a site at [www.kibaki.co.ke](http://www.kibaki.co.ke).

The 2007 Kenyan presidential election pitted two powerful politicians with lengthy political records against one another. The result was the closest vote in Kenyan election history, and one that both sides are believed to have tried to manipulate.

### President Mwai Kibaki

Mwai Kibaki is 77 years old and has served in Kenyan governments since independence in 1963. He was appointed vice-president by Daniel Arap Moi in 1978 and held that post for 10 years—until he fell out of favour with the president. Kibaki first ran for president in 1992, coming third. He ran again in 1997, this time coming second.

Kibaki finally won power in 2002, running on an anti-corruption platform. The first part of his term seemed very promising. He began a crackdown on corrupt judges and police. He promised a new constitution to limit presidential powers. He instituted free elementary school education for all Kenyans. Under Kibaki's leadership, foreign aid increased, tourism hit record numbers, and the economy expanded yearly.

But disappointment followed for many Kenyans. The proposed new constitution increased rather than diminished presidential authority (it was defeated in a 2005 referendum). The government's anticorruption minister resigned in 2005 because he was blocked from investigating a number of scandals. And, despite the improved economic situation, 50 per cent of Kenyans still found themselves living below the poverty level. Kibaki's decision to run again in 2007 seemed to many to be a serious political mistake.

### Raila Odinga

Raila Odinga, 63, son of Kenya's first vice-president, has been a parliamentarian since 1992. He served as a minister in Kibaki's cabinet from 2002 to 2005. Odinga made his first run for the presidency in 1997, coming third. He then joined the government of Daniel Arap Moi, serving as minister of energy in 2001 and 2002. Odinga hoped to be named by Moi as his successor. When that hope failed to materialize, he threw his support behind Kibaki, who won handily.

By 2005, Odinga had broken with Kibaki and founded the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). It was as the ODM candidate that Odinga ran for president in 2007. His promise was to end the corruption that remained unresolved by Kibaki's government.

### A Disputed Election

The 2007 election brought out an unprecedented number of voters, and many of them were obviously unhappy with the existing government. The ODM won more than twice as many seats in the National Assembly as did Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU). But, according to a surprise declaration by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK-[www.eck.or.ke](http://www.eck.or.ke)), the presidential victory went to Kibaki and the PNU, by 46 per cent to 44 per cent.

Tales of election fraud were rampant. The European Union team of observers condemned the election and called for an investigation. They pointed to a number of irregularities in both the vote and vote counting that clearly favoured Kibaki.

Within an hour of the ECK announcement, Kibaki had himself sworn in as president. Odinga's reaction

**Did you know . . .**

Both Canada and the U.S. threatened to block the visas of Kenyan politicians and businesspeople who fuelled violence and blocked negotiations during the recent troubles.

**Further Research**

The full agreement negotiated by Kofi Annan to end the election dispute is available at [www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/EDIS-7C9NLB?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/EDIS-7C9NLB?OpenDocument).

was one of outrage. He refused to accept the results and declared that he would hold his own alternative inauguration. He also called for a million-man march to protest the president's action.

The country was even quicker to erupt into violence. Kibera, Nairobi's large slum district, was the scene of massive riots immediately following the announcement. The violence soon spread to other parts of the country; much of it was aimed at the Kikuyu, Kenya's largest tribe and the tribe of which President Kibaki is a member.

Despite an enormous police presence, the situation worsened daily. The violence was to continue for weeks, resulting in at least 1 000 deaths and the dislocation of 600 000 people.

**Negotiating a Solution**

It seemed obvious from the beginning of the violence that only a negotiated solution between Kibaki and Odinga could bring it to an end. Both parties, however, seemed unable to move in that direction. Kibaki quickly solidified his

hold on power by appointing half his cabinet before any talks with Odinga had taken place. Odinga, in turn, insisted he would not speak with Kibaki until he agreed to abandon his claim to the presidency.

Several attempts were made to promote negotiations. John Kufuor, the president of Ghana and chair of the African Union, tried and almost succeeded in brokering an agreement in January, but the thorny issue of power-sharing prevented his success. And it was early February before Odinga indicated he would no longer demand that Kibaki resign before he would sign an agreement.

Under the leadership of former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan, an agreement was finally reached on February 28, 2008. The Kenya Accord and Reconciliation Act creates a new position of prime minister, a post to be held by Raila Odinga. He will share power with Mwai Kibaki, who will continue as Kenya's president.

**For Discussion**

Some observers have argued that a division of powers between Kibaki and Odinga, president and prime minister, will only lead to further instability and power struggles in Kenya. It might even divide the country further along ethnic lines. How would you expect the agreement to play out? What would you expect to happen if one of the participants decided to withdraw in the future? What solutions would you offer to the recent upheaval in Kenya?

# RESTORING PEACE TO KENYA

## *Tribalism and Violence*

### Further Research

The most appalling example of tribal violence in recent history is the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The government, controlled by Hutu tribesmen, initiated a well-planned campaign to systematically destroy the country's Tutsi population. About 800 000 people died in the conflict. A good short article on the Rwandan genocide is available from the BBC at [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1288230.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1288230.stm). Also helpful is an article from the United Human Rights Council at [www.unitedhumanrights.org/Genocide/genocide\\_in\\_rwanda.htm](http://www.unitedhumanrights.org/Genocide/genocide_in_rwanda.htm). The CBC Digital Archives ([www.cbc.ca/archives](http://www.cbc.ca/archives)) has a file on the UN leader of the Rwandan Mission, Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, entitled "Witness To Evil: Roméo Dallaire and Rwanda."

Violence erupted in Kenya immediately following the announcement of the 2007 presidential election results. Outside observers were prepared for a political protest against what many perceived as a fraudulent election. Few were prepared for an explosion of ethnic violence along tribal lines.

Kenya's population consists largely of people drawn from about 40 different African tribes. Most prominent among these tribes are the Kikuyu, who make up about 20 per cent of the population. The president, Mwai Kibaki, is a Kikuyu, as are many members of his Party of National Unity (PNU).

Raila Odinga, the leader of the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM—[www.odm07.com](http://www.odm07.com)) and Kibaki's main opponent in the election, is a member of the Luo tribe. It makes up about 14 per cent of the Kenyan population.

Members of both tribes have been important in modern Kenyan history. Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, was a Kikuyu. His vice-president, Oginga Odinga (Raila's father), was Luo.

### Stoking the Fire

Kenya developed a reputation as one of the most stable African nations south of the Sahara. But ethnic violence has occurred in the past—much of it aimed at the Kikuyu. "In Kenya, politicians have long stoked ethnic strife, and particularly anger over the perceived economic privileges of Kikuyus. In colonial days, the British promoted the tribe as their local proxies in Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta, the country's first president, made sure that his own people had privileged access to land, jobs, and power" (*The Globe and Mail*, January 4, 2008).

During the period between the 1992 and 1997 elections, resentment against the Kikuyu erupted in Kenya's Rift Valley. More than 2 000 Kenyans died in the violence, and another 300 000 were displaced. Most of them were Kikuyu.

Anti-Kikuyu sentiment also played a part in the 2007 election. In an article that appeared on January 7, 2008, *Newsweek* reported: "If elected, Odinga has suggested he'll oust educated Kikuyus from government, decentralize power, and build up Kenya's Western province (Luo land) with money from the Central province (Kikuyu country)—steps that could increase the tribal tensions that paralyzed the country in years past."

Within minutes of the announcement of election results, violence aimed at the Kikuyu broke out in the Nairobi slums. Stores were looted, homes were set on fire, and police were attacked. Anti-Kikuyu violence spread rapidly, especially to the Rift Valley and to the Western province, Odinga's stronghold. Police imposed a curfew on Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city. Tens of thousands of people fled to Uganda.

### Spontaneous or Planned?

At first the violence seemed spontaneous and disorganized. On January 3, 2008, *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote: "Much of the violence is focused on the economically and politically dominant Kikuyu group, but the attacks lack the Rwandan genocide's organization and preparation, and there is no evidence that Kenyan officials are organizing it."

By the end of January about 1 000 people were dead, and hundreds of thousands had fled their homes. It was also clear that at least some of the tribal

### Further Research

A perceptive article written before the election (December 11, 2007) describing how tribalism was helping to shape the election may be found at [www.reuters.com/article/inDepthNews/idUSL1051929320071211?feedType=RSS&feedName=inDeptHNews&rpc=22&sp=true](http://www.reuters.com/article/inDepthNews/idUSL1051929320071211?feedType=RSS&feedName=inDeptHNews&rpc=22&sp=true).

violence had been planned. “Leaflets calling for ethnic killings mysteriously appeared before the voting. Politicians with both the government and opposition parties gave speeches that stoked long-standing hatred among ethnic groups. And local tribal chiefs held meetings to plot attacks on their rivals, according to some of them and their followers” (*The Globe and Mail*, January 21, 2008).

In particular, considerable evidence has come to light alleging that some of the anti-Kikuyu violence in the Rift Valley was actually organized by high-level members of Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Some of the senior members of the ODM coalition are notorious for their belief in the need for “ethnic cleansing” to be used against the Kikuyu. Observers noted that the violence in the Rift Valley

was far too well-organized to have been spontaneous; tractors had even been brought in to dig trenches to keep Kenyan security forces out of the area.

Once the anti-Kikuyu violence began, there were also numerous reprisals. Most involved the Kikuyu attacking members of Odinga’s tribe, the Luo. Meanwhile both leaders, publicly deploring the violence, dug in their heels and refused to negotiate. It was the end of February before an agreement was finally signed.

Tribal violence has ended, and relative political calm has been restored to Kenya. The country was spared violence on the scale of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. But few doubt that the potential remains for a future explosion as long as political leaders feel free to exploit the tensions between their country’s ethnic groups.

### For Discussion

Raila Odinga has proposed a national conference on tribalism to bring together Kenyans to discuss the roots of ethnic conflict in Kenya. Philip Ochieng, a noted Kenyan news commentator, has argued that more is needed. “We need something much more significant, a permanent institution—a ministry or commission—of known cosmopolitan minds dedicated full-time to this problem. Its primary assignment would be to collect information on how negative ethnic attitudes take root and become so paramount in our minds as to translate into such things as ethnic cabals intent on discrimination, corruption, parochial politics, and other crimes” (*The Nation* [Nairobi], March 23, 2008, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803240324.html>).

How effective do you think either proposal would be in coming to terms with tribalism in Kenya? What kind of mandate would such an institution require in order to bring about real change? What suggestions can you offer to reduce ethnic strife in Kenya?

