



International Center for Policy and Conflict

Monday June 29, 2009
Press Statement on
POLICE REFORMS A PRIORITY

The International Center for Policy and Conflict (ICPC) is urging for fast-tracking of the police reforms in Kenya. ICPC is seeking creation of a new independent Kenya Police Service (KPS) with independent civilian oversight mechanisms to introduce thorough public scrutiny of the functions of the police. The Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV) report recommended such an arrangement, which we strongly support. This process must be accompanied by a vigorous vetting of the personnel serving in the current police force together with far reaching institutional reforms, new organic legal framework and better terms of service governing the new KPS. The Police Commissioner must have security of tenure and appointed through a stringent process of vetting by Parliament. Government of Kenya is currently failing in its primary duty to provide the public with an honest, efficient, and effective police service that ensures the rule of law and an environment of safety and security for all citizens.

ICPC notes that the grave crisis facing Kenya police today, which government is denying, stems from its historical antecedents. The police structure as currently modeled exhibits 'political-organizational' characteristics of strict subordination to the civilian administration, unaccountability to the public, coercive strength and disposition and frequent use of state violence, institutionalization of an armed police within the civilian wing, an 'eyes and ears' function on behalf of the government, pervasive secrecy and close identification with propertied interests. These characteristics are not sustainable in a democratic, republican Kenya and must be gotten rid of. The growth of vicious crime in Kenya is attributable to the failure of the state to provide an integrated security sector reforms, humane development, social justice, and governance. The current interventions being made by the government do not adequately reflect the seriousness of the police organizational crisis, which afflicts the police system and war against sophisticated crime.

We are reiterating that the decision by Kenya government to establish a special Police Reform Task Force is a waste of time and public resources and serves as a subversion tactic by the government to police reforms as the CIPEV report gave clear direction as to how such reforms should be undertaken. The current incidences of Administration Police and Regular Police internal conflicts call for urgent action on police reforms.

The government has for long defined police reforms as a priority but has lacked a comprehensive structural and ideological concept of overhauling police that includes legal reforms, administrative reforms and the resolution of problematic issues associated with police such as; lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights, and endemic corruption within the police. We expect a radical policing policy shift that would contain a new conceptual vision of police and policing, which fundamentally democratize policing and reorient the mission of the police from protecting the state to protecting the people and their rights.

ICPC is worried that government of Kenya appears to overlook the CIPEV recommendations to integrate the Administration Police into the Kenya Police Service. We are urging government to adhere to the recommendations of the CIPEV report and institute immediate changes in the police.

Given that many police officers in the Administration Police are not law enforcement professionals, and that the Administration Police is perceived to be highly politicized and close to the presidency, ICPC urges the government to create a combined police service that operates under the single command of the Commissioner of Police and is free from executive influence with the sole purpose of maintaining law and order. An independent and effective Criminal Investigation Directorate should be established to handle investigations and prevention of the crimes. We also call on the government to set a specific timeline to achieve these reforms as a critical step in restoring public confidence in the security sector.

Signed by
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Executive Director,