



LAW SOCIETY OF KENYA



IN SEARCH OF AN ANSWER:

A REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS DURING THE 2024
FINANCE BILL PROTESTS IN
KENYA



Law Society of Kenya (LSK) –
Strategic Litigation & Habeas
Corpus Project



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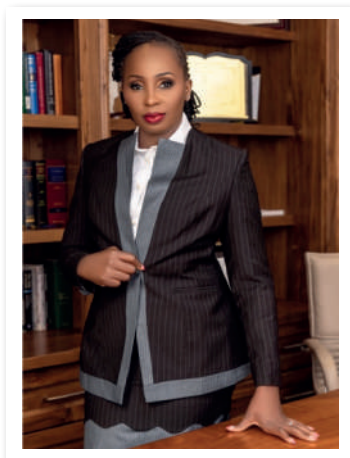
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report would not have been possible without the tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of many individuals and institutions committed to justice and accountability.

First and foremost, we extend our deepest gratitude to the advocates, paralegals, and human rights defenders who worked on the ground, documenting violations, supporting survivors, and speaking truth to power, often at great personal risk. Your courage and commitment continue to inspire. We also thank the extraordinary team at the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), including Mr. Manwa Hosea (Council Member and Convener, PIL) Ms. Joyce Wangari (Director, PIL) and Mr. Were Bonface (PIL) whose critical leadership, coordination, and legal expertise were instrumental in driving this initiative forward. Your belief in the power of law to bring about meaningful change has shaped the spirit and purpose of this work. We are equally grateful for the funding support that made this documentation possible. Your investment in human rights and justice provided the resources needed to amplify survivor voices and begin building an evidence base for advocacy and legal redress. We finally thank the survivors for being vulnerable with the documentation team and continue to honor the memories of those whose lives were lost during the 2024 Finance bill protests. We hear you. We see you. *Aluta Continua.*

This report is not a conclusion, but rather the beginning of a larger and more urgent conversation about the state's duty to protect, about the rights of protesters, and about the collective responsibility to ensure that violence and impunity are never normalized. What we present here is only a scratch on the surface. There is much more to uncover, to document, and to pursue. We hope this work contributes meaningfully to ongoing efforts to achieve justice, accountability, and structural reform in Kenya.

FOREWORD LSK PRESIDENT



The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 enshrines the right of every person to peacefully assemble, demonstrate, picket, and present petitions to public authorities. This foundational right—expressly guaranteed under Article 37—is a cornerstone of participatory democracy and civic accountability. Yet, as this

report reveals, the events surrounding the 2024 Finance Bill protests mark one of the most egregious violations of that right in our recent history.

As the nation grappled with economic grievances, young people—many exercising their constitutional freedoms for the first time—took to the streets in peaceful protest. Their courage was met not with engagement, but with bullets, batons, and intimidation. The result: scores of Kenyans killed, hundreds maimed, and many more subjected to arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and trauma that will take generations to heal.

This report paints a picture of the renaissance of attempts of backpeddling democracy as we know it vs the birth of defenders of the Constitution 2010. The re-emergence of dawn raids by the police, threats to keep silent, abductions and the finality of facing the barrel of a gun. This was against the clamour for freedom from the increasing burden from the tax master, economic enslavement, crack down on corruption, support for education amongst others. The aftermath of the clash was more lives lost, dejected Genz and youth ad-mist political reformations.

This report, the product of the Law Society of Kenya's Strategic Litigation and Habeas Corpus Project, stands as a solemn record of these violations. It documents, with rigorous evidence and verified testimony, the unlawful actions of state agents during and after the protests. It also highlights the systemic patterns of abuse, the failure of key accountability institutions, and the urgent need for legal, institutional, and policy reforms.

As the President of the Law Society of Kenya, I reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights, and the pursuit of justice without fear or favour. We did not merely observe these violations from the sidelines. We intervened in court through habeas corpus applications, initiated strategic litigation to safeguard civil liberties, and stood with victims when silence would have been complicit.

This report is not an end—it is a beginning. A beginning for public accountability. A call for prosecutions where the law has been broken. A demand for reparations where lives have been shattered. And a resolve to ensure that Kenya never again uses the instruments of the state to silence lawful dissent.

I commend the advocates, enumerators, survivors, and citizens who made this record possible. Their courage and truth-telling are the first steps in restoring dignity and justice.

Let this report serve as a legal reckoning, a historical testimony, and a foundation for action.

Faith Odhiambo
President, Law Society of
Kenya

LSK CEO



The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 enshrines the inalienable right of every citizen to assemble, to speak, and to seek redress. These are not mere aspirations; they are the bedrock of our republic. In 2024, amid economic hardship and a contested Finance Bill, Kenyans, particularly our youth, rose to claim these constitutional promises.

They marched not with weapons, but with conviction. What followed was a brutal reminder that while our laws have evolved, our systems of accountability have not.

This report, **National Report on Human Rights Violations During the 2024 Finance Bill Protests in Kenya**, is both a mirror and a memory. It reflects our collective failure to protect life and liberty, and it preserves the stories of citizens whose courage was met with cruelty. It is a forensic account of state excess: of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, unlawful detentions, and the silencing of dissent. It documents the wounds visible and invisible that continue to bleed long after the last protester fell silent.

As the Law Society of Kenya, we hold a sacred duty: to be custodians of justice and sentinels of the rule of law. In commissioning this report, we do not merely chronicle abuses; we chart a path toward reform. Through strategic litigation, victim support, and sustained advocacy, we reaffirm that

impunity must not be the price of governance.

This report is not just for lawyers, policymakers, or scholars; it is for every Kenyan who still believes in a nation governed by reason, not repression. It is for the mother in Kisumu who buried her son without answers, for the student in Kibera who still breathes in fear, and for the youth in Kitui who disappeared into the night and has yet to return.

Let this report stir the conscience of our nation. Let it serve as a legal, moral, and historical reckoning. And above all, let it remind us that justice delayed is not just justice denied; it is democracy betrayed.

Florence Muturi
Secretary/Chief Executive Officer
Law Society of Kenya

CHAIR OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION COUNCIL



“Ninavumilia kuwa Mkenya, badala ya Kujivunia kuwa Mkenya.”

This expression can easily win a contest searching for a suitable phrase that aptly captures the prevalent public view among many Kenyans who have borne witness to series of events that have unfolded in this country over the past one

year. For never ever in history did Kenya register such a high number of fatalities, human rights abuses and brutality at the hands of the police during protests.

The eruption of the unprecedented, nation-wide, Gen – Z protests last year sparked an avalanche of mixed reactions from the various sections of the Kenyan society. From the governors and the governed. The young and the old. The elected and the electorate. The Gen – Z and the rest. Most noteworthy were the reactions by the Government of Kenya through the agency of the police. Via the hands of the police, acting under the cover of the state, the country suffered to see numerous cases of abductions, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and use of excessive force by the police. As countless protesters nursed the sting of teargas canisters, innumerable businesses were looted dry and many families wounded by the pain of death. Indeed, one of the darkest phases Kenya’s history.

Amidst all these, a number of critical questions persistently lingered in the heads of many legal minds. How can the legal profession, and especially the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), address these challenges in times like these? What roles can that body of professionals that proudly style themselves as the advocates and defenders of the Rule of Law, justice, human rights and good governance play in times like these? How can the LSK ensure that the Rule of Law is upheld in times like these? How can the LSK ensure that the Government of Kenya and the police do not violate human rights in times like these? Or, how can the LSK support the victims of police brutality in time like these?

In response to above questions, the Law Society of Kenya and in particular the Public Interest Litigation Committee was confronted with an urgent need to devise innovative ways to address the crisis; an unprecedented crisis indeed as it involved abuses on a nationwide scale as the Gen – Z protests

were held in various towns countrywide. Consequently, there was a necessity for a more structured, evidence-based and sustained approach. This ultimately resulted to the conception and initiation of the '*Strategic Litigation and Habeas Corpus Project*' as part of LSK's efforts to play its part in upholding the Rule of Law, safeguarding the Constitution of Kenya and assisting the public in matters related to law and justice as mandated under Section 4 of the Law Society of Kenya Act.

The said project was commenced on *June 2024* and it had four main objectives; Evidence preservation, strategic litigation, advocacy for systemic change, and victim empowerment. This report, therefore, entails the findings and the summary of the work that the LSK did via the project in response to the 2024 Gen Z protests. The Report begins with an introduction which gives a historical background to the development, an overview of the nature of the Gen – Z protests and the circumstances that necessitated the LSK to undertake the said project. Thereafter, the report discusses the objectives, methodology and techniques used in the study. The report then proceeds to discuss and analyze the findings of the

study from the eight regional documentation centers. The Report also analyses the trends and patterns of the Gen Z protests and also examines the response of the various key institutions. Finally, the report also includes international comparative studies with other countries in relation to protests related human rights violations and concludes by suggesting a number of short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations.

We sincerely hope, dear reader, that through this report, the LSK will play a meaningful part in achieving the Constitutional dream of a country "*committed to nurturing and protecting the well-being of the individual, the family, communities and the nation*" with "*a government based on the essential values of human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, social justice and the rule of law.*" We also hope that this report will stir many Kenyans, lawyers, institutions and organisations to join hands and play their part in fighting against police brutality, abductions, extrajudicial killings and human rights violations. So that at the end we can stand out proudly and state that during our time that we '*did our part in nation building*' just to borrow the words of the poet, Henry Barlow.

As the LSK, we remained committed to the vision of living in a good country where the words '*justice be our shield and defender*' are a real lived experience and where '*justice rolls down like waters*' just to borrow the words of Dr. Martin Luther King. For as the words of President Thomas Jefferson daily remind us, "*Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.*" And so I pen this foreword with a profound sense of hope and pride, optimism and patriotism!

Manwa Hosea
Council Member and Convener
Public Interest Litigation Committee

DIRECTOR, PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION LSK



This report arises from a profound moment in Kenya's constitutional life, a time when the ideals of justice, liberty, and human dignity were tested. In response, the Law Society of Kenya mobilized its members to ensure that the rule of law did not falter. The

project outlined in this report was designed to meet immediate legal needs arising from the Finance Bill protests, but it also had a broader aim: to reinforce the role of lawyers as public servants and protectors of civil liberties.

For our young lawyers in particular, the project opened up spaces to practice legal aid and public interest work with purpose and impact. Many found themselves navigating unfamiliar and at times harsh conditions; working long hours in police stations, documenting abuses in informal settlements, and standing beside communities where legal representation had often been absent. Their dedication affirmed that the practice of law, at its core, is about service, about using our skills to stand with the oppressed and uphold justice where it is most needed.

To every young advocate who participated: your contribution was not only valuable, it was vital. You brought the Constitution to life. This work, imperfect and urgent as it was, has laid a foundation for a more responsive and people-centered legal profession.

We are grateful to the Open Society Foundations for making this initiative possible. May this report not only document what was done, but also serve as a call to deepen our commitment to public interest lawyering and to building a legal profession that truly serves the people of Kenya.

**Wangari Kagai, Advocate
Director, PIL and Advocacy
Law Society of Kenya**

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Background

Over the years, Kenya has witnessed an alarming rise in cases of enforced disappearances, particularly in the context of law enforcement operations, counterterrorism measures, and public demonstrations. These disappearances often involve arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detentions, and extrajudicial actions carried out by security agencies, raising serious concerns about state accountability and the protection of fundamental rights. The recent 2024 Finance Bill protests have further exposed the extent of human rights violations perpetrated by state actors. Reports indicate widespread abuses, including excessive use of force by the police, mass arrests, enforced disappearances, and the controversial deployment of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) to suppress civil unrest. Many individuals who participated in or were suspected of supporting the protests remain unaccounted for, with families left in distress and without recourse to justice. These actions have not only violated constitutional protections but have also underscored the urgent need for legal and policy interventions to safeguard civil liberties. The Law Society of Kenya (LSK) is an institution committed to upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights. LSK has taken a proactive role in addressing these violations through strategic litigation, habeas corpus applications, and the systematic documentation of extrajudicial actions. However, given the scale and severity of the ongoing abuses, there is a need for a more structured, evidence-based and sustained approach to ensuring justice and accountability.

It is against this backdrop that the LSK undertook this project to investigate the various human rights violations occurring during and after the protests. The project uncovered the full extent of these violations, provide legal support to victims and their families, and advocate for institutional reforms to prevent future occurrences. By leveraging legal interventions, advocacy, and strategic litigation, the LSK challenges continuing impunity, push for policy changes, and strengthen legal safeguards against enforced disappearances in Kenya.

1. Introduction

In 2024, Kenya faced a historic youth-led uprising that came to be known as the “Gen Z protests,” marking one of the most significant civic movements since the country’s reintroduction of multiparty democracy in the 1990s. The protests were ignited by the unveiling of the Finance Bill 2024, which proposed sweeping tax increases as part of the government’s fiscal consolidation efforts under pressure from the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international lenders. Among the most controversial provisions were proposed taxes on bread, motor vehicles, internet and mobile money transactions, and salary deductions for the Housing Fund, all of which disproportionately affected young, unemployed, and underemployed citizens. The movement began organically on social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter),

TikTok, and Instagram, where young Kenyans, many without prior experience in activism, mobilized under hashtags such as #RejectFinanceBill2024, #OccupyParliament, and #GenZRevolution. These platforms became spaces not only for protest coordination but also for civic education, legal support information, and live reporting, circumventing traditional media narratives.



Credits: Business Daily

The first nationwide protest took place on 18 June 2024, with thousands marching in Nairobi and other urban centers. Protesters wore black, waved placards, and sang patriotic songs, evoking a non-partisan,

citizen-first identity. Despite attempts at maintaining peaceful demonstrations, tensions escalated on 25 June 2024 when Parliament passed the Bill. In a dramatic and symbolic act, protesters breached the heavily

guarded Parliament compound, an unprecedented occurrence that stunned the nation and drew comparisons to global protest movements such as the Arab Spring and the 2020 End SARS protests in Nigeria.

The state responded with force. Police fired live ammunition, tear gas, and water cannons. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International Kenya and the Kenya Human

Rights Commission, reported extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and mass arrests. At least 22 people were killed on 25 June alone, with the death toll climbing in subsequent

days. The Law Society of Kenya and grassroots legal aid groups provided emergency legal support to detained protesters, while volunteer medics treated the wounded in makeshift clinics.



Credits: Reuters

In the aftermath, the protests broadened beyond the Finance Bill. Demonstrators began to demand accountability for corruption, the resignation of government officials, and justice for victims of police violence. The movement also challenged Kenya's traditional political elite, refusing endorsement from opposition politicians and emphasizing a decentralized, leaderless approach to organizing. Youth groups, university students, artists, and civil society actors played key roles in sustaining momentum. International observers, including foreign missions, issued statements expressing concern over the use of force and called for restraint and dialogue. The President, under mounting

pressure, eventually announced that he would withdraw assent to the Finance Bill and conduct public consultations, a partial concession seen by some as a victory for the protest movement. However, by then, the movement had evolved into a broader conversation about Kenya's governance, youth agency, and democratic accountability.

These events mark a pivotal moment in Kenya's political history. The Gen Z protests signaled a new era of civic consciousness driven by young people digitally savvy, politically aware, and increasingly disillusioned with formal institutions. They demonstrated the power of decentralized activism, the role of social media

in shaping political discourse, and the fragility of state-society relations in the face of economic hardship and exclusion.

1.1. Objectives of the Documentation

The documentation initiative led by LSK had several interlocking objectives, centred on strategic litigation and accountability. First, it aimed to capture an accurate record of human rights violations during and after the Finance Bill protests. By collecting victim testimonies, medical records, photographs, and other evidence in each region, the project created a comprehensive repository of facts that could be used in court and for advocacy purposes. This was crucial because one

common barrier to justice in Kenya is the lack of evidence or the intimidation of witnesses in cases of police abuse

Secondly, the documentation was intended to support strategic litigation, meaning carefully chosen legal cases aimed at challenging impunity and bringing about systemic change. LSK's approach was to identify emblematic cases (for instance, clear instances of extrajudicial killing or enforced disappearance) that could be taken to court for redress. The objective here is twofold: secure justice for individual victims (through court orders, compensation, prosecutions of perpetrators) and set legal precedents or public pressure that deter future violations. These outcomes would not only help the immediate victims but serve as a warning to security agencies that unlawful crackdowns will have consequences. Further, project recognized the importance of creating a historical record and data for advocacy. The project documented not just individual cases but also aggregated data (e.g. total arrests, injuries, deaths, patterns of violations by region) to paint a national picture. This data would fuel advocacy with Kenyan oversight bodies and international actors.

Finally, the documentation was geared toward empowering victims and communities. By interviewing survivors and assuring them that their stories will be used to seek justice, the project gave victims a sense of visibility and hope. It also aimed to break the cycle of fear and silence: many victims of police abuse feel too intimidated to speak out or report to authorities. The documentation centres provided a community-based, safe space to report violations without fear of reprisal. In doing so, it signalled that civil society is watching and that victims are not alone. In summary, the objectives of the documentation can be encapsulated as: evidence preservation, strategic litigation, advocacy for systemic change, and victim empowerment.

1.2. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative interviews with affected persons and qualitative analysis of legal and institutional frameworks to assess the human rights violations that occurred during the 2024 anti-Finance Bill protests in Kenya. The quantitative component of the study involved direct interviews with victims and survivors of police violence across several regions affected

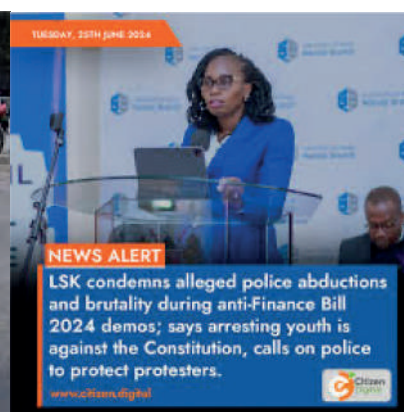
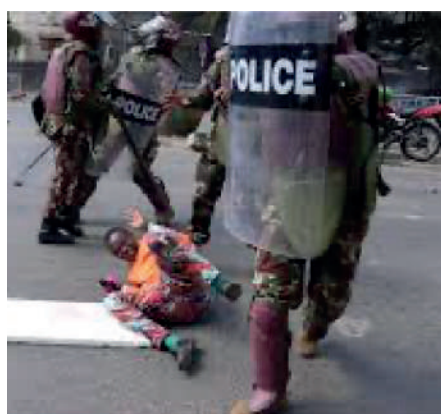
by the protests. Interviewees were asked semi-structured questions concerning the nature of violations they experienced or witnessed, including physical injuries, arrests, enforced disappearances, and threats. Where available, testimonies were corroborated with medical records, photographic evidence, and statements from witnesses. This process not only provided detailed case-specific data but also allowed for the aggregation of statistics across incidents capturing trends in arrests, injuries, deaths, and regional patterns of abuse. Complementing the primary data, this report reviewed official reports from the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), which had independently monitored and documented violations during the protests. These reports offered a broader institutional perspective and helped triangulate findings from individual testimonies. The project also conducted an in-depth legal and policy analysis, examining relevant provisions in the Kenyan Constitution, the National Police Service Act, and the National Police Standing Orders, as well as regional and international human rights standards applicable to the use of force and the right to protest. Central to the methodology was

the empowerment of victims and affected communities. Interviews were conducted in safe documentation centres, designed to create spaces where victims could speak freely without fear of reprisal. By listening to survivors, assuring them of follow-up, and committing to use their stories in pursuit of justice, the project sought to restore a sense of visibility and dignity to those most affected. This approach also aimed to break the cycle of fear and silence that often accompanies police abuse in Kenya. This multi-dimensional methodology combined evidence gathering, legal analysis, and community engagement to advocate for systemic change, and empower victims. These interlocking strategies position the documentation not just as a record of past abuse, but as a tool for accountability, reform, and healing. It is noteworthy, despite these steps and assurances, that in some areas the fear of speaking out derailed the overall objectives as victims were scared of being targetted after the exercise.

2. Legal Frameworks on the Right to Protest

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, firmly enshrines the right to peaceful assembly as a cornerstone of democratic governance. Article 37 declares that “every person has the right, peaceably and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket, and to present petitions to public authorities.” This provision reflects Kenya’s post-2007

constitutional reform efforts to guarantee civil liberties and foster participatory governance. It affirms that citizens have the right to express dissent, organize demonstrations, and petition the government on matters of public interest, without fear of intimidation, harassment, or violent suppression, so long as their actions remain peaceful.



Credits: Citizen TV news.

Importantly, this right is not merely symbolic it is operationalized by legislation, most notably the Public Order Act (Cap. 56). Contrary to popular belief and past administrative practice, this Act does not require citizens to obtain permission from the police to hold public gatherings. Instead, Section 5 of the Act stipulates that organizers are only required to provide prior notification to the Officer Commanding Station (OCS) at

least three days in advance. This procedural requirement serves to allow the police to prepare and facilitate the protest, not to grant or withhold permission. The shift from a “permission” to a “notification” model is a critical safeguard against arbitrary restrictions and aligns with international human rights standards under instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Kenya

is a party. Kenyan courts have consistently upheld this interpretation, emphasizing the duty of the State to enable, not frustrate, the exercise of Article 37 rights. In *Ferdinand Ndung'u Waititu & 4 others v Attorney General & 12 others* [2016] eKLR, the High Court clarified that while the right to assembly is not absolute, any limitations must be reasonable, justifiable, and proportionate in a democratic society. The judgment reiterated that law enforcement authorities have a positive obligation to protect and facilitate peaceful protests, and that any use of force or restrictions must be in strict compliance with the law. The Court further clarified that only gatherings that become violent or involve the use of arms fall outside constitutional protection and may justify lawful intervention.

Equally important, both Kenyan and international law prohibit the excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies. The Constitution of Kenya, under the Bill of Rights, affirms the right to life (Article 26) and the freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (Articles 25(a) and 29). The use of force by law enforcement is not only governed by constitutional protections

but also reinforced by specific provisions in the National Police Service Act (2011) and the National Police Service Standing Orders. These legal instruments provide clear and binding guidelines that police officers must follow when exercising force. Under Section 61 of the National Police Service Act, officers are required to first attempt non-violent means before resorting to force. The law stipulates that force may only be used when such non-violent alternatives are ineffective or would not achieve the intended result. When force becomes necessary, officers are mandated to exercise restraint and ensure that the level of force used is proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved. The law also requires police to minimize damage and injury, respect and preserve human life, and ensure that medical assistance is provided to any injured persons as soon as possible. They must also notify the relatives or close friends of those affected at the earliest opportunity. The Act strictly limits the use of lethal force to situations where it is unavoidable in order to protect life, and only where an officer believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to prevent imminent death or serious injury to themselves or others.

Any use of force, especially that resulting in death or injury, must be reported to the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) and other oversight bodies.

The National Police Service Standing Orders, particularly Standing Order No. 29, further reinforce these principles. They allow the use of firearms only in very limited circumstances: in self-defense or in the defense of others against an imminent threat of death or serious injury; to prevent a particularly serious crime involving a grave threat to life; or to arrest or prevent the escape of a person who presents such a danger, but only when less extreme means are insufficient. The Standing Orders also emphasize that officers should give a warning before discharging a firearm, unless doing so would put them or others at greater risk, or where a warning would be inappropriate or ineffective. In all cases, the use of firearms must remain proportionate to the threat faced. These domestic frameworks align with international standards, particularly the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, which require that force must be necessary, proportionate, and

that lethal force may only be used as a last resort, specifically when there is an imminent threat to life. Any unlawful killing by the police constitutes an extrajudicial execution, breaching both Kenya's domestic laws and its obligations under international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Significantly, Article 244 of the Constitution mandates that the National Police Service must "strive for the highest standards of professionalism and compliance with human rights," embedding accountability and restraint at the core of police operations. Similarly, Article 238(2)(b) requires that national security be pursued with full respect for the rule of law and human rights. Collectively, these instruments create a comprehensive legal framework that seeks to ensure police accountability, safeguard human life, and uphold the rule of law during all police operations.

Despite these legal guarantees, in practice, protests in Kenya, particularly those involving politically sensitive issues or economically disenfranchised groups, are often met with excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and dispersal through tear gas or live ammunition. This disconnect between constitutional theory

and law enforcement practice underscores the ongoing struggle for the full realization of civil liberties. The events of June 2024, during which peaceful demonstrators protesting the Finance Bill were met with lethal force, starkly illustrate the systemic gap between constitutional ideals

and state conduct. Article 37 is not only a guarantee of freedom of assembly but a litmus test for the maturity of Kenya's democracy. The State's ability and willingness to respect and facilitate peaceful protests reflect its commitment to constitutionalism, accountability, and the rule of law.

3. Findings from the Documentation Centers (Regional Summaries)

The findings in this report are presented region by region to reflect the geographically diverse nature of the protests and the human rights violations that accompanied them. The primary source of data is the Law Society of Kenya's (LSK) network of Documentation and Justice Centers, which were set up in various counties to monitor, document, and respond to rights violations in real time during the 2024 Finance Bill protests. These centres were based in:

- i. Nairobi (Kibera, Mukuru and Mathare)
- ii. Kisumu
- iii. Kisii
- iv. Nakuru
- v. Eldoret

- vi. Meru
- vii. Machakos
- viii. Mombasa

These centers served as vital hubs for collecting first-hand testimonies, processing walk-in reports, verifying photographic and video evidence, and providing legal support to affected individuals. In areas where LSK had limited or no physical presence, such as parts of Kisii and remote rural counties, the findings are supplemented by verified information from credible civil society organizations, media reports, and medical or legal professionals who documented incidents independently. Every effort has been made to triangulate and verify external data sources to ensure

consistency and accuracy in the reporting.

Each regional section elucidates the types of violations recorded (such as unlawful arrests, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances, and deaths), the number of victims, and available demographic information, including age, gender, and occupation where available. These narratives provide context-specific insights: the nature and scale of the protests in each region, the patterns of police or state response, any incidents of community-led protection or resistance, and relevant legal or institutional dynamics. By presenting the data this way, the report not only highlights the regional disparities in how protests unfolded and were policed, but also enables a deeper understanding of the localized forms of state violence and legal recourse. When taken together, these regionally grounded snapshots offer a granular yet cohesive national picture of the human rights violations associated with the anti-Finance Bill protests. They reveal not just the scale of abuse but also the unevenness in accountability mechanisms and the urgent need for systemic reform across multiple levels of governance and law enforcement.

3.1. *Nairobi*

3.1.1. *Mukuru*

The Mukuru informal settlements in Nairobi, particularly Mukuru kwa Reuben, were among the most affected areas during the state's forceful response to the anti-Finance Bill protests. Over a three-day documentation period, the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) recorded 7 cases of individuals who sustained gunshot wounds, 6 people from Mukuru kwa Reuben, and 1 along Ngong Road. All of these victims were shot during the height of the protests and, although severely injured, survived their wounds. No fatalities were formally documented during this exercise. However, community members alluded to other incidents that may not have been captured, raising concerns about underreporting, especially in densely populated and socio-economically marginalized areas.

The documentation effort in Mukuru revealed a complex set of challenges that impeded the full visibility of state violence in the area. Despite the severity of incidents reported, the turnout of victims for interviews and legal assistance was significantly lower than anticipated. Several intersecting factors contributed to this low engagement. Firstly,

victims expressed acute fear of being identified and targeted by the police, especially in a context where security forces maintained a visible and intimidating presence in the community even after the protests had subsided. This pervasive surveillance created a climate of fear and mistrust, discouraging individuals from coming forward. Secondly, many residents feared being labeled as “troublemakers” or perceived as politically affiliated with opposition movements simply for participating in the protests or reporting abuse. In the context of Kenya's long history of criminalizing dissent particularly within informal settlements such fears are not unfounded. These neighborhoods have often been sites of excessive policing, with past incidents of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances further eroding public trust in state institutions. Thirdly, logistical barriers also played a role. Many injured individuals lacked access to transportation or feared being followed if they attempted to leave their neighborhoods. In a few cases, family members actively discouraged victims from speaking to the documentation team, citing concerns about future targeting or loss of livelihood.

These dynamics underscore the need for alternative, community-trusted approaches to human rights documentation, especially in urban informal settlements where formal mechanisms are often viewed with suspicion. They also highlight the urgency of creating safe, anonymous, and decentralized reporting channels, as well as longer-term community engagement strategies that address both immediate protection needs and the structural drivers of silence and fear.

Another significant and troubling finding from the documentation exercise in Mukuru was the apparent interference with medical documentation and treatment of protest-related injuries. Several local dispensaries in the area appeared unwilling or perhaps unable to formally diagnose gunshot wounds sustained during the protests. In one illustrative case, a young man with a clear bullet injury was denied a proper examination at a local clinic. Medical staff avoided documenting the true nature of the wound, and the victim was ultimately forced to seek treatment at a higher-tier hospital where his injuries were finally acknowledged and treated. This reluctance by

lower-level health facilities to record or treat protest-related injuries suggests the presence of an “invisible hand” of intimidation or political pressure, likely from state actors or local authorities. These facilities, often operating under government oversight or near law enforcement, may have feared reprisals for documenting police-inflicted violence. The pattern points to a deliberate effort to suppress evidence of state brutality by obstructing the medical record-keeping process which is an essential pathway for legal redress and public accountability.

Despite these systemic barriers, some survivors from Mukuru still found the courage to share their stories during the documentation period. Many recounted harrowing encounters with security forces. One victim, who arrived at the documentation centre on crutches, described being shot in the leg while trying to flee a police charge. He spoke of the immense difficulty he faced in obtaining treatment: initial medical responders were dismissive, offered only minimal aid, and avoided documenting his injuries. It was only after repeated attempts and travel to a distant hospital that he finally received appropriate care. Others who came forward

were visibly traumatized, with some still bearing untreated wounds, but expressed relief at finally being heard. For many, the documentation center represented the first safe space where their experiences were acknowledged without fear of judgment, criminalization, or retaliation. These testimonies not only exposed the scale of police violence but also revealed the broader institutional failure to support victims in the aftermath of abuse.

3.1.2. Kibera

Kibera, Nairobi’s largest informal settlement, was another major epicentre of the protests. The documentation exercise in Kibera saw 81 survivors interviewed. The nature of violations in Kibera differed from Mathare and Mukuru. Most Kibera survivors spoke of indirect injuries, largely due to teargas and the chaos of stampedes, rather than gunshot wounds. Tear gas exposure was the most widespread issue: out of the 81 cases, 10 people suffered tear gas-related injuries such as severe breathing difficulties and skin rashes. Tragically, 2 women suffered miscarriages, which they attributed to inhaling concentrated tear gas during the protests. Direct police violence was also recorded. 12 survivors reported physical injuries from

police beatings of torture. For example, some had wounds and fractures consistent with being struck by batons or gun butts. Two cases of police gunshot wounds were documented in Kibera; however, the individuals reporting those cases were not the victims themselves but witnesses, and they could only provide limited details. Eleven survivors described injuries sustained from falls and stampedes as crowds scattered from police charges. These included dislocations, broken bones, and bruises. Notably, one young man reported being chased by police and, in the scramble, falling from a high point, leading to a fracture. He emphasized that while the police didn't beat him, their actions directly caused his injury.

Arbitrary arrests were a significant issue in Kibera as well. 6 people reported being arrested during the protests. Many of these arrests were carried out by officers not in uniform (plainclothes police or those covering their faces), which made it hard for victims to distinguish between legitimate law enforcement and possible abductors. Out of the six documented arrests, two

survivors were held on cash bail of Ksh 30,000 each. Their charges were eventually dropped, but the bail money was never refunded, effectively turning the legal process into a form of extortion.

The psychological toll of the crackdown in Kibera cannot be overstated. Throughout the documentation exercise, survivors repeatedly expressed deep-seated fear of further targeting by security forces. This fear significantly shaped how individuals responded to violence not only in the immediate aftermath, but in their willingness to seek redress. Many victims, even those suffering serious physical injuries or personal loss, said they avoided reporting their cases to the police or formal state institutions due to the risk of retaliation. This pervasive mistrust extended even to the documentation exercise itself. In its early stages, some community members were hesitant to engage, fearing that it might be a covert government profiling operation aimed at identifying protest participants. Such suspicion was not unfounded; it stemmed from lived experiences of betrayal and abandonment by state systems that have historically failed, and in some

cases harmed, the residents of informal settlements like Kibera.

Kibera's history is marked by cycles of violence, especially in the wake of elections or large-scale protests. These repeated episodes of state repression often accompanied by extrajudicial killings, unlawful arrests, and impunity, have fostered a culture of fear and resignation. For many, justice is seen not just as delayed, but as fundamentally inaccessible. This history fuels a cynical but understandable response: as several victims put it, they would rather "suffer in silence" than risk further exposure or harm by coming forward. These attitudes reflect more than individual trauma; they point to a systemic failure of state accountability and protection. The psychological scars compounded by past betrayals have made it difficult for victims to imagine a justice system that works in their favor. This underscores the urgent need for trauma-informed approaches to human rights documentation and for building long-term community trust in independent legal and medical institutions that can serve as safe alternatives to state-led processes.

The quantitative insights are summarized below:

Quantitative summary of the form of Human rights violations suffered by the survivors

No. of People	Nature of Violation	Locality	Intervention Sought
39	Injuries suffered from gunshot	Kibera resident.	None sought.
10	Teargas induced injuries including miscarriages and body harm	Kibera residents.	None sought.
7	Arbitrary arrest and intimidation	Kibera residents.	None sought.
12	Injuries suffered on the bodies of the survivors after being tortured and/or beaten	Kibera residents.	None sought.
11	Injuries suffered to the limbs from dislocations, bruises and fractures by survivors after police disrupted their peaceful assemblies by shooting in the air and lobbing teargas cannisters at them.	Kibera residents.	None sought.
2	Loss of property during the demonstration.	Kibera residents.	None sought.

3.1.3. Mathare

Mathare, another densely populated low-income settlement in Nairobi, emerged as a significant hotspot during the anti-Finance Bill protests. The Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) served as the central hub for documentation efforts across the Nairobi North and East zones. Throughout the exercise, 19 survivors of protest-related violence were interviewed. The average age of those documented was just over 31 years, and the vast majority, approximately 84%, were male. All the survivors were lifelong residents of Nairobi's informal settlements, with most eking out a living through casual labor

in construction, transport, or vending across the city.

In stark contrast to Kibera, where teargas exposure and stampede injuries dominated the reports, the violence in Mathare was marked by the widespread use of live ammunition. Nearly all of the 19 survivors interviewed sustained gunshot injuries, particularly to the legs and lower limbs. Their accounts consistently pointed to a troubling pattern: police officers fired live rounds not at aggressors but at unarmed individuals who were either fleeing or standing at a distance. Survivors described how officers, particularly from the General Service Unit (GSU),

often aimed low, deliberately targeting legs to maim rather than kill.

One such case involved a 33-year-old casual laborer who was shot in the left leg on 7 August 2024 near the Eastleigh Air Force Base. He had not been participating in the protest but was simply walking with friends when GSU officers opened fire indiscriminately into the crowd. A bullet tore through his leg, leaving him incapacitated and unable to return to work. His story mirrors many others documented in Mathare. On 25 June, and again during the peak protest days of 7–8 July, police reportedly fired live ammunition

into residential areas including Huruma, Eastleigh, and Mathare North as demonstrators scattered. Several survivors were shot from behind while attempting to flee, while others were struck by stray bullets while inside their homes.

These testimonies paint a chilling picture of law enforcement treating low-income urban settlements as militarized zones, with little regard for the safety of nonviolent residents. The widespread use of live bullets against unarmed civilians, especially those who were not actively protesting amounts to a gross violation of Kenya's legal framework governing the use of force. It also echoes past instances of state-sanctioned brutality in Mathare and similar communities, where the default response to dissent has been overwhelming violence rather than lawful crowd control.



Injuries by some survivors in Mathare.

Accessing medical treatment for gunshot victims in Mathare was fraught with challenges, exposing both the inadequacies of emergency health response and the heavy reliance on community-based networks during crises. Survivors consistently reported that, at the height of the protests, official emergency services were either unavailable or unwilling to enter volatile areas. In this vacuum, it was volunteer street medics and humanitarian groups, most notably the Kenya Red Cross, that became the first line of response. These actors performed critical first aid interventions, often in high-risk environments where violence was still ongoing. Street medics provided on-the-spot care in alleyways, makeshift shelters, and roadside triage

points. Their primary focus was on stanching bleeding, dressing wounds, and stabilizing victims for transport. These efforts were lifesaving, particularly in cases where bullets had severed arteries or shattered bones. In several accounts, survivors noted that had they waited for formal ambulance services, they likely would not have survived due to blood loss or delayed care. Following initial first aid, those with severe injuries were evacuated, usually by community members or human rights monitors using private vehicles or motorbikes to public referral hospitals. The most commonly accessed facilities included Kenyatta National Hospital, Mbagathi Hospital, and Kiambu Level 5 Hospital. Hospital records (where they could be obtained) corroborated survivor testimonies, detailing injuries such as entry and exit wounds, fractured femurs, and embedded bullet fragments. These clinical records also became important evidence for verifying the scale and nature of police violence.

One Mathare victim, for instance, underwent a series of surgeries after a bullet shattered the bone in his lower leg. The operations were not only medically intensive but also financially draining, as the public health system, already overstretched, required patients to purchase medication and follow-up materials out of pocket. His case is emblematic of a broader crisis: protest-related injuries in low-income areas often lead to long-term disability, loss of income, and psychosocial trauma, with little to no support from the state. Moreover, the fear of surveillance and arrest discouraged some victims from seeking hospital care at all. In several instances, survivors opted to self-treat or rely on informal healers due to concerns that health facilities might be reporting gunshot

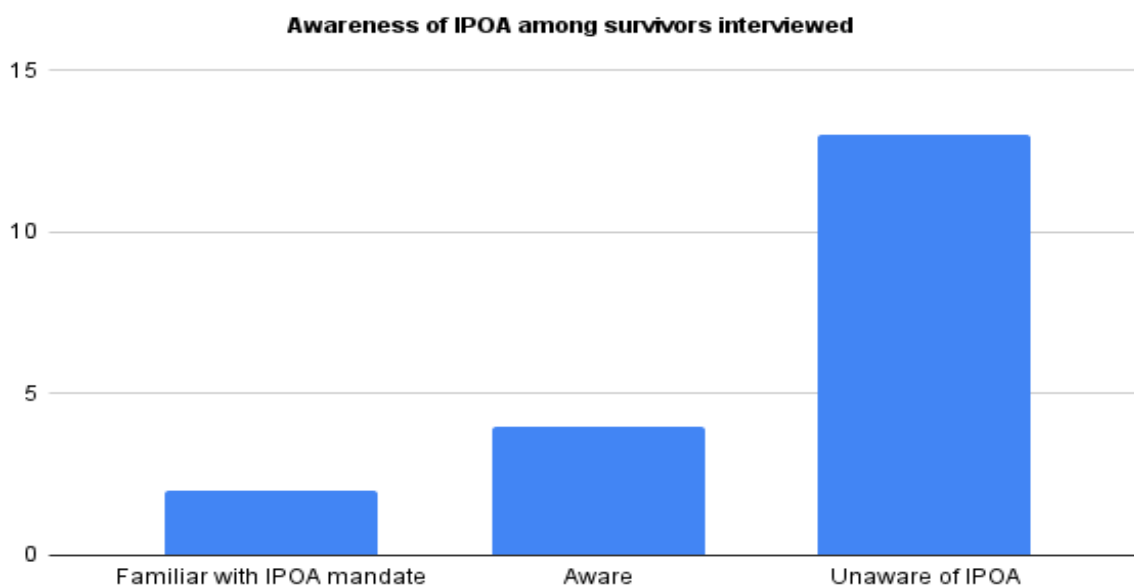
cases to police. This fear is rooted in past experiences where hospitals became entry points into criminal investigations, particularly in politically charged moments.

The psychological and socio-economic impacts in Mathare are profound. Many survivors lost their livelihoods (at least temporarily) due to their injuries. For example, several of the wounded young men were primary breadwinners for their families, and their inability to work for weeks or months caused severe financial strain. As noted in the Mukuru findings, women in these families often had to step up; one injured man's wife had to take on informal laundry jobs to feed their children while he recovered. The trauma of the violence also left deep scars: community organizers reported that attendance at subsequent protests or public meetings plummeted, as people feared a repeat of the crackdown. All 19 survivors interviewed reported

significant psychological trauma from the violence they experienced or witnessed, yet none had received professional counselling. A few mentioned occasional support from friends, but most had to rely on their resilience to return to daily life before fully recovering.

None of the Mathare survivors interviewed had reported their cases to the police or any state authority at the time of documentation. This reluctance stemmed from a deep-seated belief that doing so would be either futile or dangerous. Many survivors feared retaliation or further harassment from the same security forces that had violated their rights, especially in a context where law enforcement operates with minimal accountability in informal settlements like Mathare. Others expressed a sense of hopelessness and mistrust in the justice system, feeling that lodging a complaint would not lead to any meaningful

action or redress. Compounding this was the limited awareness of independent oversight mechanisms. Most interviewees were unfamiliar with the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), the statutory body mandated to investigate police misconduct. Among the few who were aware of IPOA's existence, skepticism was widespread, many doubted that the institution had either the power or the will to bring police officers to justice. This sentiment reflects a broader crisis of confidence in Kenya's accountability systems, particularly in marginalized urban areas where historical patterns of impunity have fostered widespread disillusionment with state institutions. This lack of reporting is not simply a gap in legal procedure, it is a reflection of structural exclusion and institutional mistrust, which must be addressed if justice is to be made accessible and meaningful to all communities.



Quantitative summary of the form of Human rights violations suffered by the survivors

No. of survivors	Nature of violation (gunshot, death, injury etc)	No. of survivors	Locality	Intervention sought
7	Gun-shot wounds	7	Mathare and CBD	Most of the victims sought medical help from Blue House Dispensary in Mathare, Red Cross, Institutions such as: Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU), availed medical assistance to the injured Some survivors reported their violations to IPOA. No convictions have been made to date. However, it was also noted that most do not know about IPOA or fear reporting their cases to the police
3	Rubber bullet wounds	3	CBD	
2	Deaths	2	Mathare	
6	Injuries from police beatings	6	CBD	
4	Injuries from police tear gas canisters	4	CBD	

N.B. The illustrated number of survivors include those mentioned during the documentation as victims of police brutality.

3.2 Kisumu Region

Kisumu was another major flashpoint during the 2024–2025 Finance Bill protests, symbolizing the scale of discontent across Kenya’s Nyanza region. The Law Society of Kenya’s West Kenya

branch, operating through the Kisumu Justice Centre, documented 13 protest-related cases during a three-day outreach exercise in May 2025. Of these, approximately one-third involved fatal outcomes either the direct victim had been killed,

or the interviewee was a relative of someone who died during the protests. This suggests that at least four to five protest-related deaths were directly documented by LSK’s Kisumu team. However, other human rights monitoring bodies, including the Kenya

National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), reported even higher figures. For example, as of early July 2024, KNCHR had already confirmed two protest-related deaths in Kisumu, but that number rose following renewed clashes in mid-July. On 20 July 2024, a 40-year-old man (E.O.A.) was shot in the head and killed, a case later confirmed by autopsy reports, and one of several incidents indicating the widespread use of lethal force by police.

Survivor accounts from Kisumu paint a picture of indiscriminate and aggressive policing. Numerous interviewees recounted seeing officers fire live rounds directly into crowds and residential homes. One survivor, identified as S.O., described how his cousins were struck by stray bullets while inside their home in Nyalenda, a working-class neighborhood in Kisumu. In another case, a local tailor who was not participating in any protest activity was shot while working in his shop, underscoring the reckless and indiscriminate nature of police gunfire.

The types of violations recorded in Kisumu were severe and echoed patterns seen in other parts of Nyanza. They included shoot-to-kill tactics, arbitrary

use of lethal force, and brutal physical assaults that in some cases amounted to torture. The Kondele neighborhood, historically associated with protest movements, saw some of the most egregious violence. One 24-year-old survivor recounted being cornered by riot police and beaten nearly to death with batons. He sustained multiple head injuries, lost two teeth, and was left unconscious on the roadside. Another young man was beaten into a coma and only regained consciousness days later in the hospital. These accounts reflect more than excessive force; they point to inhumane treatment that may constitute cruel, degrading, or even torturous acts under international human rights law. Tear gas was also widely misused in Kisumu. Interviewees described being overwhelmed by prolonged, high-volume exposure to tear gas, particularly in residential estates. Victims reported symptoms such as “choking,” “temporary blindness,” and long-term respiratory problems. One man from Nyalenda shared that his eyesight had deteriorated significantly following repeated exposure to tear gas, despite not being directly involved in the protests.

In terms of demographics, the majority of victims in Kisumu were young men aged 18 to 34, either directly targeted or caught in the violence, while in public spaces. However, women were also acutely affected, not only as participants but as grieving relatives of victims, particularly widows and mothers. Many women found themselves facing sudden economic hardship after the death or incapacitation of a family breadwinner. According to the reports, women bore the dual burden of emotional trauma and economic precarity, with no formal mechanisms in place to support them through loss, recovery, or justice. The protests in Kisumu were among the most intense and sustained in the country, marked by large-scale demonstrations, road barricades, and repeated clashes with police. Major flashpoints included Kondele, Obunga, Nyalenda, Manyatta, and sections of the Kisumu-Kakamega highway. These areas witnessed both mass mobilization during the day and heavy-handed security operations in response. Tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition were routinely used by police to disperse protesters, often triggering running battles that spilled into residential neighborhoods.

A particularly alarming feature of the protest response in Kisumu and other parts of Western Kenya was the emergence of night-time house-to-house raids by security forces. According to multiple residents, these operations occurred after daytime protests had subsided. Eyewitnesses from estates such as Manyatta and Obunga alleged that during the night, unidentified police units often in black uniforms or balaclavas entered homes believed to belong to known protest organizers or young men suspected of participating in demonstrations. Victims were reportedly pulled from their beds, beaten, and in several cases, arrested without warrants or explanation. These incidents created a pervasive atmosphere

of fear and insecurity, effectively criminalizing entire neighborhoods and pushing communities into silence.

This covert and extrajudicial form of law enforcement may also be linked to several cases of enforced disappearances. LSK's Kisumu documentation team recorded at least one unresolved case of a missing person, last seen being taken from his home at night by masked men. To date, his whereabouts remain unknown, and no formal charges have been brought. Such cases underscore the urgent need for continued tracing efforts, legal intervention, and accountability mechanisms to address unlawful detentions and possible abductions. These night raids represent a serious

violation of due process and the constitutional rights to liberty, security, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. They also mirror long-standing patterns of state repression in Kenya's political hotspots, especially in Nyanza, where collective punishment and intimidation tactics have historically been used to suppress dissent. The psychological toll on residents, particularly women and children who witnessed family members being dragged away in the dead of night, cannot be overstated. Without transparent investigations and systemic reform, such actions risk deepening public distrust in security institutions and entrenching cycles of violence and impunity.

Below is a summary of Kisumu region violations:

Kisumu & Nyanza		Numbers / Details	Nature of Violations
Fatalities	Multiple (min. 4–5 documented; possibly more). At least 2 killed by early July 2024; additional deaths mid-July (e.g. E.A. shot dead).		Lethal force (gunshots to head, chest). Several cases of police firing into crowds and at fleeing protesters (alleged shoot-to-kill orders).
Injuries	At least 13 cases documented (71% involved serious injury). Many gunshot survivors (e.g. one with bullet lodged requiring surgery); many beaten unconscious. Tear gas caused respiratory injuries.		Excessive force: live ammunition causing maiming; physical assaults amounting to torture (caning, clubbing); indiscriminate tear gassing affecting even children and elderly.
Arrests	Reported cases of arrests in Kisumu city and environs. Many were young men; some high-profile activists temporarily detained. Some arrests involved plainclothes officers in unmarked cars. Most released on bail, but a few faced trumped-up charges (e.g. rioting, damage to property).		Arbitrary detention; some allegations of custodial brutality. In a few cases, arrestees in Kisumu were transferred far from home (e.g. to Nairobi) to complicate legal support.

Disappearances	At least 1–2 unresolved missing person cases in Kisumu documented. E.g. a youth last seen being arrested on July 12, 2024 whose whereabouts remain unknown.	Enforced disappearance (secret detention or possible extrajudicial killing with body not found). Families reported intimidation when searching for missing loved ones.
Demographics	Primarily male youth (teens to 30s). Victims included students, boda boda (motorbike taxi) riders, casual laborers. Some older victims: e.g. a 40-year-old man killed. Women affected mostly as relatives of victims (mothers, wives).	Protest participation was heavily youth-led. Many victims were breadwinners for extended families. Women often came forward to report on behalf of slain sons/husbands.
Areas Affected	Kisumu city (Kondele, Nyalenda, Manyatta, CBD), and other Nyanza towns (reports of deaths in Siaya – 1 killed, in Migori and Homa Bay minor clashes). Kisumu Law Courts became a haven where victims reported cases in aftermath.	Urban protest zones and some rural towns. Notably, in Siaya County a student protest saw one person shot dead; in Kisii (neighboring but culturally separate, see below) also 1 death.

3.3 Mombasa (Coast Region)

In the Coast region, Mombasa County emerged as the primary center of protest activity against the 2024–2025 Finance Bill. As Kenya's second-largest city and a traditional opposition stronghold, Mombasa saw significant mobilization, though on a smaller scale compared to protest epicenters like Nairobi or Kisumu. Nevertheless, the level of state response and the resulting harm was no less serious. 11 Primary testimonies from Mombasa detailed

incidents of police brutality, unlawful arrests, and abductions during protests in areas like Moi Avenue, Mama Ngina Drive, and Marikiti Market. Local estimates, particularly from the human rights organization Haki Africa, suggest that between 5 and 10 people may have been killed during the protests in Mombasa. These fatalities reportedly occurred when police opened fire to disperse demonstrators in high-density areas such as Majengo and Likoni. Among the cases documented by human rights monitors was

that of a 22-year-old man who was shot in the leg by police near the Ferry area during a peaceful march. The bullet shattered his femur, requiring extensive medical intervention. Other protesters suffered soft-tissue injuries caused by baton charges, especially in the cramped alleyways of Old Town where escape routes were limited. Victims described being cornered and beaten as police pursued demonstrators through residential streets, showing little restraint even in the presence of children and bystanders.



Photos of the Protest hotspots i.e. Qafe Point, survivor injuries and an altercation with the police

Policing in Mombasa during the protests followed patterns similar to those seen in other cities but also exhibited some distinct dynamics. The demonstrations were initially organized as peaceful marches, often led by coalitions of civil society groups, human rights defenders, and university students. Protest routes typically began at Uhuru Gardens or

outside the County Assembly building, with demonstrators waving placards and chanting against high taxation and cost-of-living pressures. However, police frequently declared these gatherings “unlawful assemblies,” sometimes within minutes of commencement, and moved in with force to disperse crowds. One of the most consistent complaints

from protesters and residents alike was the excessive and indiscriminate use of tear gas. In tightly packed neighborhoods such as Majengo and parts of Old Town, police launched tear gas canisters into residential zones with little consideration for civilian safety. The effects were particularly severe in Majengo, where tear gas reportedly entered homes and

community spaces, including a mosque, during prayer time. This caused widespread panic, with children, elderly residents, and worshippers struggling to breathe.

Haki Africa documented multiple cases of non-protesters particularly women and children requiring medical attention due to exposure. These included residents who had not

participated in demonstrations but were nonetheless caught in the crossfire of crowd-control operations. The use of force in such contexts reflects a disregard for proportionality and the safety of bystanders, raising concerns about violations of both national and international standards governing the use of force in civilian areas. The coastal human rights watchdog MUHURI and

Amnesty International Kenya's coastal chapter also documented an incident of alleged torture: two activists arrested in June 2024 claimed that while in detention, they were whipped with wires and questioned about who was "funding" the protests. This raised concerns that security agencies were treating the protests as insurrection to be quashed by any means.

Summary of Mombasa's findings:

Mombasa (Coast)	Numbers / Details	Nature of Violations
Fatalities	Between 5-10 people died, according to Haki Africa	Use of live ammunition resulting in death. One victim reportedly shot in the back while running. No indication victims were armed.
Injuries	Common injuries: gunshot wounds to limbs, head injuries from beatings, tear gas-related injuries (asthma attacks, etc.). Several cases of excessive force documented by Haki Africa.	Excessive use of force: live bullets, aggressive baton charges, and heavy tear gas deployment in populated areas. Some injuries occurred in stampedes as crowds fled police.
Arrests	50+ reported to be arrested over course of protests (rough estimate from multiple protest days). Many charged with unlawful assembly or rioting, then released on bond.	Arbitrary arrests; some reports of detainee abuse (beatings in custody). Protesters also reported police extorting bribes for release in a few instances, a form of abuse of power.
Demographics	Mix of youth activists, students, and some older participants (including local traders). Mombasa protests had a significant student and youth leader presence. A few women activists were prominent in organizing, though most on-street protesters were male.	The killed and seriously injured were all male (ages ~20-30). Women were part of planning/leading but fewer were direct victims of physical harm (aside from tear gas exposure) as they often stayed at the periphery for safety.
Context & Hotspots	Central Mombasa (CBD, Uhuru Garden), Majengo, Likoni Ferry area, Changamwe. Protests often after Friday prayers and on announced "action days." Security forces included regular police and General Service Unit (GSU) riot squads brought in from Nairobi.	Protests were mostly peaceful marches that turned chaotic when police intervened. Mombasa's layout (narrow streets) made any police crackdown likely to affect entire neighborhoods (collateral impact on bystanders).

3.4 Nakuru (Rift Valley)

Nakuru County, located in Kenya's Rift Valley region, was not spared from the nationwide unrest triggered by the 2024–2025 Finance Bill. The epicenter of the protests in this region was Nakuru town, Kenya's fourth-largest urban center and a historically strategic political hub. Although the protests in Nakuru received less national media coverage than those in Nairobi or Kisumu, the violations that occurred were no less severe. During the demonstrations, security forces employed excessive force, including the firing of live ammunition into crowds, brutal physical beatings, and mass arrests. These tactics resulted in serious injuries and several fatalities.

During the documentation exercise carried out by the Law Society of Kenya and its partners, 9 individuals (or their next of kin) came forward to report protest-related violations in Nakuru. The majority of those documented were young men under the age of 35, reflecting the broader demographic composition of the protests. However, turnout was markedly lower than anticipated. This was attributed to a prevailing atmosphere of fear and mistrust: many victims were reluctant to speak out,

concerned that participation in the documentation process could expose them to retaliation by state agents or stigmatization within their communities. Some expressed doubts about whether justice would ever be served and feared that the data collected would be misused or ignored. The documented cases revealed a grim pattern of abuse. Among the victims were peaceful protesters, including persons with disabilities, who had come out to voice their opposition to the Finance Bill. Also among those harmed was a journalist, an accredited member of the media who was shot while covering the events, despite wearing visible press credentials. This incident highlights the growing risk faced by members of the press when reporting on state violence in politically charged contexts.

Multiple victims in Nakuru sustained gunshot wounds. One particularly harrowing case involved a young man who was struck in the abdomen with a rubber bullet, which caused such extensive internal damage that he required four surgeries to save his life. His case underscores the potentially lethal consequences of so-called "non-lethal" crowd control weapons when used improperly or at close range. Tragically, three of the nine

documented cases involved fatalities attributed directly to police action. These deaths point to a pattern of disproportionate force and disregard for the principles of necessity and proportionality in law enforcement responses. In each of the fatal cases, victims were either shot during dispersals or beaten to death while in custody, according to accounts provided by witnesses and next of kin. The nature of violations in Nakuru closely mirrored those observed in other protest hotspots across the country, namely, the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians, excessive force during dispersals, and the targeting of both protesters and bystanders. The presence of persons with disabilities and journalists among the victims further highlights the indiscriminate nature of the violence and the absence of safeguards for vulnerable or protected groups.

Below is a summary analysis for Nakuru:

Nakuru (Rift Valley)	Numbers / Details	Nature of Violations
Fatalities	3 confirmed deaths (June–July 2024). Victims include a journalist (female, shot dead) and at least one student. One death in 2023 protests also recorded (July 2023).	Police shootings: live bullets causing fatalities. Notably included non-protester (journalist) indicating indiscriminate nature.
Injuries	At least 6 people suffered gunshot wounds (non-fatal) during 2024. Others injured by beatings and flying rocks (as confrontations turned into riots).	Excessive force through shooting and beating. Some injuries also from protesters throwing stones and ensuing scuffles – but majority stemmed from police action (bullet wounds, baton injuries).
Arrests	30+ arrests in Nakuru County	-
Demographics	Victims ranged from teenagers to middle-aged.	-
Protest Hotspots	Nakuru town: CBD (near Nyayo Gardens), low-income estates like Kaptembwa, Rhonda, Kivumbini.	Clashes in residential areas when police pursued protesters into estates. Also incidents on Nairobi-Nakuru highway (burning tires, etc.)

3.5 Eldoret (Uasin Gishu, North Rift)

Eldoret, the commercial and political heart of Kenya's North Rift region, witnessed significant human rights violations during the Finance Bill protests held on 24–25 June 2024. Despite the severity of police violence reported by local residents, Eldoret remains one of the most under-documented protest sites. This discrepancy between reality on the ground and what was officially captured stems from a confluence of factors including structural, political, and psychological. The majority of protestors in Eldoret were

young people from informal settlements such as Kipkaren, Sugunana, Huruma, and Langas. These neighborhoods are densely populated, economically marginalized, and home to some of the county's most politically aware youth. The majority of the protesters were youths aged between 25 and 35 years of age who worked as casual labourers earning meagre pay and with very young families and were willing to fight for their rights against punitive taxes. The youths came from the slums of Kipkaren, Sugunana, Huruma and Langas in Eldoret to peacefully protest and they strategically

occupied the town while others happened to be by standers. It is important to note that most of these youths reported that the police officers who were meant to protect them turned against them and used bullets, rungus and tear gas to deter them from protesting. Surprisingly, no known social justice halls or community-based organisations exist in Eldoret, where the victims can seek help. While they may exist, they are not known to ordinary citizenry. The majority of the victims would get medical assistance and head back home. They feared reporting, stating that the police were meant to

protect them, but instead turned against them. Witnesses reported the use of live bullets, tear gas, and heavy batons, resulting in severe injuries some of which went unreported, untreated, or treated in silence.

Unlike protest epicenters like Nairobi or Kisumu, Eldoret lacks a network of active social justice centers, legal aid clinics, or rapid response teams that can offer legal, psychosocial, or medical support to victims. In the absence of trusted structures to document abuse or follow up on violations, most survivors simply sought medical treatment often at personal cost and returned home quietly. No mechanisms existed to help them file complaints, preserve medical evidence, or pursue justice. Many feared retaliation or were simply resigned to the idea that their suffering would go unheard. The region's political significance further complicated these dynamics. Eldoret is widely viewed as the stronghold of the sitting President and the broader ruling coalition. This created a charged atmosphere where any form of protest even peaceful was perceived as politically disloyal or rebellious. Young Kalenjin men, in particular, reported feeling vulnerable. Speaking out about police brutality was seen

as not only risky but traitorous tantamount to betraying “their own.” This perception silenced many victims and bred a climate of suspicion around anyone asking questions, collecting data, or offering support.

During the documentation exercise, only 8 cases were formally recorded. This was far below expectations and is almost certainly an undercount. Those who did come forward were primarily from non-Kalenjin ethnic communities residing in Eldoret. These individuals expressed that, while still afraid, they felt somewhat less exposed to local political retaliation. In contrast, Kalenjin youth often declined to be interviewed, citing deep mistrust and fear of being profiled or “reported to the DCI.” This chilling effect was reinforced by language used by survivors themselves. Several told documenters: “Mimi ni mnyonge, siwezi pigana na serikali” “I am powerless, I cannot fight the government.” Others said bluntly: “Hatutaki kupelekwa kwa DCI” “We don’t want to be taken to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations.” Such statements reflect not only fear of arbitrary arrest or harassment but a profound sense of systemic abandonment and learned helplessness.

Eldoret’s case reveals the deep fractures in Kenya’s landscape of accountability and protection. In regions where state power is heavily localized and identity politics are entrenched, victims of violence often feel doubly silenced, both by the state and by their communities. It also underscores the urgent need to invest in community-based legal infrastructure and to build protective alliances even in politically sensitive regions. Without these efforts, the most vulnerable, those with the least political capital, will continue to suffer invisibly, with their wounds uncounted and their voices unheard.

3.6 Lower Eastern (Machakos, Makueni, Kitui)

The “Lower Eastern” region comprising Machakos, Makueni, and Kitui counties witnessed notable unrest during the 2024–2025 Finance Bill protests, although the scale and intensity of demonstrations varied across the three counties. Falling under the jurisdiction of the Law Society of Kenya’s Lower Eastern branch, these predominantly rural and semi-urban areas experienced youth-led mobilizations rooted in long-standing economic frustrations, unemployment, and perceived neglect by central

government. While the protests did not reach the scale of those in Nairobi or Kisumu, they were nonetheless forceful enough that civic space in all three counties was deemed “Not Free” during the peak protest period of June–July 2024, according to civil society monitors.

Machakos County emerged as a protest hotspot early in the national wave of unrest. On 27 June 2024, youth protesters blocked the Nairobi–Mombasa highway at Mlolongo, a key transport artery just outside Nairobi, using burning tires and makeshift barricades. Reports indicate that in some cases, demonstrators extorted motorists for safe passage, reflecting the desperation and disorganized nature of the protests. Attempts by police to clear the road triggered violent confrontations and running battles through the town.

The events in 2024 reopened painful memories from the previous year. On 12 July 2023, 20-year-old Ann Wanjiru was shot and killed by police in Mlolongo while walking to school. She was not part of the demonstrations, yet was struck by a bullet to the chest as police opened fire to disperse crowds. Her post-mortem revealed a direct gunshot wound to the

heart. Wanjiru’s death sparked national outrage and came to symbolize the cost of excessive policing on innocent lives. Her name was widely invoked during the 2024 protests as a symbol of the need for accountability and restraint. Tragically, the pattern of lethal force continued into the 2024 demonstrations. During the June–July protests, at least one protest-related fatality was reported in Machakos County, although it did not receive the same level of national attention as Wanjiru’s case. Civil society sources suggest that the actual number of casualties may be higher but underreported, due to both fear of retaliation and the absence of a sustained local documentation infrastructure. Across Machakos and its neighboring counties, demonstrators voiced anger not only at the Finance Bill’s proposed tax hikes but at broader socioeconomic exclusion. Youth unemployment, stalled infrastructure projects, and rising living costs were common grievances. In areas like Matuu (Machakos), Wote (Makueni), and Kitui Town, protests were generally less violent but nonetheless significant in terms of civic defiance. Local youth groups played a leading role, often organizing through informal networks and social

media platforms, which made their mobilization harder to predict and their suppression more sweeping.

In Makueni, the protests were concentrated around Wote town and neighboring trading centers. These demonstrations were not only widespread but impactful marking one of the few counties where public pressure yielded a concrete political outcome. In a notable development, Governor Mutula Kilonzo Jr. withdrew Makueni County’s proposed Finance Bill 2024, which included local tax increases, in direct response to the unrest. This decision signaled that, at least in Makueni, public dissent could translate into immediate policy change. However, this civic success was overshadowed by serious human rights violations. The region has a tragic history of police violence against protesters. On July 19, 2023, during earlier demonstrations, 25-year-old Peter Ngolanye was shot dead by police who fired into a closed shop where he had taken shelter. Witnesses confirmed that he was unarmed and posed no threat. Governor Mutula publicly acknowledged the killing and formally requested an investigation by the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), marking a rare instance

of government responsiveness to protest-related death.

Unfortunately, similar violence recurred in 2024. During the June protests, Amnesty International documented the killing of a 22-year-old female university student in Wote. She was reportedly shot dead as police opened fire on a crowd. At least 20 others sustained injuries in the same incident, many from live ammunition. The violent dispersal of the protest left a deep scar on the community, reigniting debates about the legality and proportionality of force used by police in civilian areas. Beyond physical harm, the protests caused substantial economic disruption. Tear gas fired by police allegedly ignited fires in densely packed commercial areas, resulting in the destruction of small businesses including salons, clothing boutiques, and eateries. Local traders such as Stephen Mulei and Faith Mwendu reported catastrophic financial losses. Whether the fires were accidental or triggered by deliberate tactics remains unclear, but victims squarely blame the use of tear gas and indiscriminate police action in confined public spaces. Notably, Makueni experienced post-protest reprisals. Reports surfaced of

county government employees who were dismissed from their positions after participating in the demonstrations. This raised serious concerns about the infringement of labor rights and the suppression of free expression, suggesting that retaliation extended beyond street violence into administrative punishment and political intimidation.

While Kitui's protests during the 2024 Finance Bill demonstrations were less violent than those seen in other counties, they were deeply symbolic and politically resonant. Youth leaders most notably were at the forefront of local mobilization, voicing sharp critiques of the Finance Bill and denouncing what they described as the national parliament's growing detachment from citizens' lived realities. The protests in Kitui were marked by an emphasis on civic consciousness rather than street confrontation. Demonstrators called for transparency, accountability, and even proposed the formation of grassroots watchdog groups to monitor the voting behavior and performance of their Members of Parliament. Despite the lack of recorded fatalities or mass injuries, Kitui was not spared from protest-related human

rights violations. Instead of direct violence in the streets, the county became a site of covert repression, notably, enforced disappearances. During and after the protest period, human rights defenders reported that more than ten individuals went missing following night-time abductions, many of them youth known to have played organizing roles in the demonstrations. These abductions carried out by unidentified men in unmarked vehicles followed a pattern consistent with other cases across the country where state security agencies were suspected of targeting protest leaders. The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) acknowledged receipt of multiple complaints from Kitui and launched preliminary investigations into the possible involvement of security forces. Families of the missing reported receiving threats and warnings to "stay quiet" or face consequences an intimidation strategy clearly intended to halt further inquiries and stifle public advocacy. In some cases, individuals reappeared days or weeks later, often without explanation, and with visible signs of trauma or fear. These silent releases, while relieving to families, underscored the opaque and unaccountable

nature of the abductions. As of the time of documentation, several Kitui residents remained unaccounted for, with their whereabouts unknown and no charges brought forward. The ambiguity surrounding their fates and the systemic silence that accompanied their disappearance has instilled a climate of fear among youth and activists in the region. Unlike the visible brutality of tear gas or bullets, the threat of vanishing without a trace has a profoundly

chilling effect on dissent, eroding civic participation and trust in the justice system.

Kitui thus exemplifies a different but equally insidious mode of protest repression: one rooted in secrecy, fear, and extrajudicial tactics. It highlights how, even in the absence of street violence, dissent can be effectively silenced through invisible means. The county's experience demands greater scrutiny of state security practices, stronger protection for

civic actors in rural areas, and urgent legal reforms to address enforced disappearances as a serious human rights violation under both national and international law. The Lower Eastern experience is a powerful reminder that violations of civic space are not limited to major urban centers. They manifest in rural towns and trading centers, in local government offices, and in the silence of homes waiting for missing sons.

Summary table for Lower Eastern (Machakos, Makueni, Kitui):

Lower Eastern (Machakos, Makueni, Kitui)		Details	Nature of Violations
Fatalities		Machakos: 6 killed during altercations with the police.	Lethal force by police firing live bullets at protesters and bystanders. Notably, victims were often not involved in violence.
Injuries		Makueni: 20 reported to be injured in one protest (Wote, 2024), including serious wounds from live ammo. Kitui: Few direct injuries reported (protests largely peaceful, though some minor scuffles).	Heavy use of force in Machakos/Makueni – tear gas, batons, live fire causing injuries. Some injuries indirectly from chaos (e.g. fires destroying property in Makueni).
Arrests		Machakos: ~15+ arrests documented (HRW noted at least 15 arrested in Machakos protests). Makueni: A few arrests of key youth leaders, but overall fewer mass arrests reported.	Arbitrary arrests, some with excessive force during arrest (beatings). In Kitui, intimidation took the form of disappearances rather than formal arrests. Machakos detainees faced brutality (claims of beatings in cells).
Disappearances		Machakos: No known long-term disappearances, though some short-term abductions possible. Makueni: No reported disappearances. Kitui: 10+ cases of enforced disappearance during protests – victims taken at night, many later freed but some still missing; families intimidated.	Unlawful abductions by suspected state agents. Victims denied due process and contact. Clear violation of rights; creates climate of fear. IPOA investigating Kitui cases.

Demographics	Predominantly youth (Generation Z) protesters across all three counties. Machakos/Makueni victims included students, unemployed youth, small traders. Kitui's missing were mostly young men known for mobilizing peers. One notable female victim in Makueni (university student killed).	-
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4. Analysis of Patterns and Trends of human rights violations during the 2024 Finance bill protests.

Analyzing the data from all regions, clear national patterns emerge in how the protests were policed and the nature of human rights violations that occurred:

4.1. *Escalation of Police Violence Compared to Previous Protests*

The scale and intensity of lethal force deployed during the 2024 Finance Bill protests was unprecedented in recent Kenyan history. Human rights monitors documented at least 65 protest-related deaths across the country in 2024, a staggering figure that triples the death toll from the infamous Saba Saba protests of 1990, long regarded as one of Kenya's darkest episodes of state violence. In addition, more than 2,000 people were arrested nationwide, roughly double the number of arrests recorded during the 1990 demonstrations. These figures reflect a dramatic escalation in state repression, even by Kenya's historically volatile protest standards.

While earlier episodes of protest violence, such as the 2016 anti-IEBC demonstrations and the 2017 post-election unrest, were marked by brutality and excessive force, the 2024 protests witnessed an altogether more militarized and punitive state response. This time, the police, alongside other security formations such as the General Service Unit (GSU), Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU), and unidentified plainclothes agents appeared to operate with near-total impunity. Reports from across the country cited widespread use of live ammunition, shoot-to-kill tactics, torture-like beatings, and night-time abductions, particularly targeting youth protest organizers.

This pattern of repression was not accidental. It reflects what many observers describe as a continuum of impunity within Kenya's policing system. Despite widespread documentation of police violence in previous protest cycles including the 2017 post-election killings and the 2023 demonstrations against the Housing Levy not a single police officer had been convicted by mid-2024. Investigations by oversight bodies such as IPOA often stalled or failed to secure prosecutions, sending a clear signal that state violence would not be punished. This lack of accountability emboldened security forces to act more aggressively in 2024, confident that they would face no legal or political consequences. The 2024 protests also marked a significant generational and structural shift in civic mobilization. Unlike prior protests often led by opposition politicians, civil society organizations, or trade unions, the Finance Bill protests were driven largely by Generation Z youth who self-organized via

social media. This decentralized, leaderless movement caught both the state and traditional political actors off guard. Lacking familiar gatekeepers to negotiate with or co-opt, the authorities appear to have viewed the movement as unpredictable, defiant, and uncontrollable—and responded with disproportionate force to suppress it quickly.

In many parts of the country, the crackdown employed tactics more typical of counterinsurgency operations than lawful crowd control. These included abductions by undercover units, forcible disappearances, and coordinated intimidation campaigns targeting protest leaders, social media influencers, and even sympathetic public servants. Such tactics betray a dangerous conflation by the state of lawful civic protest with subversion or criminality, an outlook that undermines constitutional rights and deepens public mistrust in law enforcement institutions. The 2024 crackdown was not just an anomaly; it was a watershed moment in the erosion of civic space in Kenya. It revealed a security apparatus increasingly detached from legal restraint, a political class fearful of youthful dissent, and an accountability system too weak to protect lives

or deter future abuses. Unless urgently addressed through structural reforms, truth-telling, and prosecution of perpetrators, the cycle of protest and repression risks repeating only with higher stakes and greater societal trauma.

4.2. Geographic Spread and Hotspots

The 2024 Finance Bill protests were strikingly widespread, with over a dozen counties experiencing sustained demonstrations and state repression. While protest activity reached both urban and rural areas, certain hotspots consistently recorded high levels of violence and state response. Foremost among these was Nairobi, particularly in low-income settlements such as Kibera, Mathare, and Mukuru, as well as the central business district (CBD). As the seat of national power and the site of the largest and most visible protest crowds, Nairobi emerged as the epicenter of both casualties and arrests, drawing the heaviest security deployments and the most aggressive policing. Kisumu and other parts of the Nyanza region, particularly Kondele and Nyalenda, also witnessed intense crackdowns. These areas have a long history of political marginalization,

economic neglect, and opposition support, all of which shaped the grievance landscape underlying the protests. The use of lethal force, house raids, and beatings in Kisumu mirrored past cycles of protest violence, reinforcing entrenched perceptions of ethnic and regional targeting by state forces.

Notably, violence was not confined to traditional opposition strongholds. In Rift Valley, political heartland towns like Eldoret and Nakuru became flashpoints, illustrating the cross-cutting nature of public discontent. Demonstrators in Eldoret and other Rift Valley towns braved tear gas and bullets to protest, suggesting that anger over economic injustice transcended ethnic and political affiliations. The presence of lethal force in these areas further reveals how state repression was not applied selectively but was instead nationwide in scope.

The urban–rural divide in protest dynamics was also noteworthy. Urban centers experienced more sustained and larger-scale mobilizations, likely due to population density, media attention, and better access to organizing platforms like social media. However, even semi-rural and rural towns were not spared violence. In places like

Emali (Makueni) and Turbo (Uasin Gishu), protests were smaller but still met with disproportionate police force, including live ammunition. This underscores a chilling trend: no protest, regardless of size or location, was immune to state-sanctioned violence.

In essence, the protests revealed a national pattern of repression that spanned geography, ethnicity, and class. Whether in capital cities or trading towns, in perceived opposition zones or ruling-party strongholds, the state's response was uniformly punitive emphasizing containment over dialogue, and punishment over protection. This nationwide pattern has significant implications for future civic engagement in Kenya, pointing to an urgent need for reforms that protect the right to peaceful assembly across all regions and communities.

4.3. *Use of Plainclothes Officers*

A deeply troubling pattern observed during the 2024 protests was the widespread deployment of plainclothes security officers to infiltrate, monitor, and violently suppress demonstrations. This tactic was consistently reported across multiple hotspots, including Nairobi, Kisumu, Eldoret, and

Nakuru, and formed a key element of the state's intelligence-led response to the protests.

Numerous victims and witnesses described scenarios in which individuals dressed in ordinary civilian clothing suddenly turned violent arresting, beating, or even shooting protesters. In many cases, protesters had no idea the person was a security officer until the violence began, creating a climate of intense fear and uncertainty. The absence of uniforms, badges, or any form of identification not only prevented immediate accountability, but also blurred the line between state action and criminal conduct. Protesters were left unsure whether the person approaching them was a fellow citizen, a legitimate officer, or an abductor. In effect, the use of plainclothes operatives weaponized anonymity. This tactic was not limited to crowd infiltration. In several areas, plainclothes officers were directly involved in abductions of protest leaders and outspoken youth. As documented in Nairobi's informal settlements, Kisumu's estates, and Kitui town, undercover agents reportedly seized individuals off the streets or from their homes, forced them into unmarked vehicles often vans or sedans without license plates and drove them

away without formal charges or explanations. These extrajudicial abductions bear the hallmarks of enforced disappearances and constitute grave violations of domestic and international law.

The strategic use of plainclothes teams points to an intelligence-driven crackdown, in which the state treated protest organizers and active youth as subversive threats, akin to criminal syndicates or insurgents. This perception likely explains why traditional policing tactics were replaced with covert operations, surveillance, and secret detentions more typical of national security crackdowns than lawful responses to civic protests. Beyond physical harm, this approach inflicted lasting psychological trauma. Protesters began to mistrust everyone in the crowd, unsure who might be an informant or agent provocateur. In effect, the use of plainclothes operatives undermined solidarity within protest movements, spread paranoia, and discouraged participation, particularly among first-time protesters or those in regions unaccustomed to direct confrontation with the state.

The reliance on covert repression tactics raises serious concerns about the erosion of democratic norms and rule of law in Kenya.

It signals a state apparatus increasingly willing to sidestep transparency and due process in favor of intimidation and psychological warfare. This demands urgent scrutiny not only from oversight bodies like IPOA and Parliament, but from civil society and the international community committed to safeguarding the right to peaceful assembly.

4.4. *Indiscriminate Force and Bystander Victimization*

A consistent and alarming pattern across all documented regions was the indiscriminate nature of force used by security agencies during the 2024 Finance Bill protests. Testimonies from Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Machakos, and other counties point to widespread violence affecting not only protesters but also uninvolved civilians. Individuals who had not participated in any demonstrations were beaten, tear-gassed, or shot and often in or near their homes, workplaces, or while going about routine activities.

This trend was particularly stark in Kisumu, where residents reported that bullets fired by police pierced the walls of homes, injuring people inside their houses. In Nairobi, tear gas

seeped into residential buildings in informal settlements like Kibera and Mukuru, affecting children and the elderly. In Mombasa, tear gas was launched into dense neighborhoods like Majengo, even entering mosques. In each case, the use of force was not targeted at protest-related threats, but appeared instead to be a blanket punitive response to the presence of unrest.

Crucially, many protests were initially peaceful, largely composed of chanting youth, students, and community members exercising their constitutional right to assembly. However, violence typically escalated after police intervention. In numerous accounts, security forces responded to peaceful gatherings with aggressive dispersal tactics, including tear gas, batons, and live bullets. Witnesses described police firing into crowds without clear provocation or identifiable targets, effectively using crowd control weapons as tools of suppression rather than protection. These actions violate both Kenyan law and international human rights standards, which require that the use of force be lawful, proportionate, and directed at specific threats. As a result, numerous bystanders became unintended casualties.

Victims included Ann Wanjiru, a student in Machakos who was shot on her way to school; a tailor in Kisumu struck by a bullet while at work; and a hawker in Nakuru who was hit while fleeing police gunfire. Our documentation is replete with such examples of people simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, caught up in violent crackdowns that made no distinction between demonstrators and the general public.

This indiscriminate approach did more than cause physical harm; it instilled a pervasive climate of fear. In many communities, residents feared leaving their homes not because of protest violence, but because of the likelihood of encountering aggressive, unaccountable security officers. The message was clear: anyone could be a target. This erosion of public trust in law enforcement undermines not only the right to protest, but the broader social contract between citizens and the state. The nature and pattern of violence witnessed in 2024 cannot be dismissed as isolated incidents or the actions of rogue officers. They reflect a systemic failure of restraint and accountability—a state-sanctioned response that treated public gatherings as threats and entire communities as expendable.

4.5. *Coordination and Command Signals*

The remarkable uniformity in the pattern of human rights violations across regions strongly suggests that the state's response to the 2024 Finance Bill protests was not merely the result of isolated local decisions, but rather the product of centralized planning and coordination. From Nairobi to Kisumu, Nakuru to Mombasa, and even in smaller towns like Wote and Emali, the same suite of repressive tactics was deployed often simultaneously. All regions documented use of live ammunition, widespread deployment of plainclothes officers, indiscriminate tear gas, mass arrests, and in some cases, enforced disappearances. This simultaneity points to a national-level directive or standing orders guiding security responses, rather than ad hoc or localized decisions by individual commanders. It raises serious concerns about policy-level complicity in violations that may meet the threshold of systemic abuse. Moreover, the geographic breadth of these violations—from urban informal settlements to rural trading centers underscores that no part of the country was immune from repression if protests erupted.

In sum, the analysis of emerging

trends reveals a systematic and intensifying crackdown marked by:

- i. Disproportionate and often unlawful use of force;
- ii. A broad, nationwide scope of repression;
- iii. New clandestine methods, including night-time abductions and enforced disappearances;
- iv. A noticeable increase in brutality compared to previous protest cycles.

These patterns point to a dangerous normalization of human rights violations as a routine method of public order management in Kenya. The

shift from crowd control to punitive suppression, where even non-participants face violence, signals a regression in democratic governance and civil liberties. If left unchecked, this trajectory threatens not only freedom of expression and assembly, but also the rule of law and public trust in state institutions. Addressing this crisis requires more than rhetorical commitments. It demands urgent, transparent investigations, individual accountability for violations, and structural reforms to the security and oversight frameworks that have enabled this culture of impunity to persist and evolve.

5. Impacts on Survivors and Families

The human impact of the 2024 protest crackdown has been profound and multi-dimensional, leaving deep scars not only on survivors but also on their families, neighborhoods, and communities. The social, economic, psychological, and political costs borne by ordinary citizens form perhaps the most enduring and tragic legacy of the Finance Bill demonstrations. Psychological trauma was near-universal among those interviewed. Survivors consistently described a state of heightened fear, emotional numbness, and psychological distress following their encounters with security forces. Many suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with symptoms including persistent anxiety, intrusive flashbacks, insomnia, and avoidance of public spaces. In numerous cases, youth particularly those in Machakos, Makueni,

and Eldoret spoke of recurring nightmares and overwhelming panic when encountering men in uniform, even months after their ordeal. Some who were abducted or violently beaten reported being unable to sleep, constantly reliving the trauma in their minds.

5.1. Psychological impacts

The psychological toll also extended to families, especially women; mothers, sisters, and widows who bore the dual burden of grieving loved ones and shielding children from fear and uncertainty. In Kisumu and Kitui, families of those killed or disappeared reported feelings of helplessness, paranoia, and emotional shutdown. Parents of missing youths described living in limbo, unable to mourn or move on without knowing the fate of their children. Family members of those disappeared went through the torment of not knowing whether their loved one was dead or alive for weeks, which is a severe psychological torture in itself. In Kitui, families of missing youths recounted constant anxiety and helplessness as they searched mortuaries and police stations in vain. Even after some were released, the ordeal left deep emotional scars. Victims also describe heightened fear of authority.

One victim from Kisumu said he still panics whenever he sees a police uniform, breaking into sweats and heart palpitations. Another from Kibera described how a simple sound (like a car backfiring) sends him ducking for cover with a racing heartbeat. Children have been traumatized too: there are reports of young kids who witnessed their parent being shot or beaten, and now they scream or cry whenever they see police in the neighborhood. In one particularly painful account, the mother of 22 year old young man, shot dead in Kisumu) said she lost not only her son but also her own sense of security and trust in the state. Her younger children were so traumatized by seeing their brother's body that they required counseling, and they remain fearful of any loud noises or gatherings.

In Makueni, the impact of these incidents can still be seen in how people in communities view organizing against injustice and participation in democracy. Talking about problems with the government is much less common in traditionally cohesive and tight-knit areas like rural Makueni. As a result of the violent actions, many now feel it is best to say nothing and stay afraid. These days, older people encourage the younger generation not to take

part in protests or debates, as they believe they are too risky, rather than the rightful way to express their views. Victims' mental health often affects not only themselves but also their entire family. Those who lose a family member or suffer an injury describe feeling helpless, suffering from guilt, and being afraid. In Machakos, the family of the student who was shot said they had difficulty socializing and still felt emotional discomfort. Lack of acceptance for mental health care in some cultures may prevent families from speaking up and seeking treatment for their problems, which makes their trauma last longer. The decline in public trust and involvement in society has several other effects. Forums for youth participation in governance and development were once alive with voices, but now young people prefer not to get involved. During the interview, a youth leader in Kitui, who spoke in 2025, pointed out that, *"If expressing yourself is dangerous, you have to remain silent for your safety."*

The impact of this trauma is not merely individual; it is collective and intergenerational, affecting the social fabric of entire communities. In places like Kibera and Mathare, the pervasive sense of injustice

and abandonment by the state has created an atmosphere of mistrust, resentment, and withdrawal from civic life. Some survivors who were previously active in community organizing or peaceful activism have since gone silent fearful that speaking out again could bring further harm.

5.2. *Social Stigma and Isolation*

Beyond individual trauma, survivors often face stigma and changed social relations. In some communities, especially rural ones, victims of police brutality find themselves labeled as “troublemakers” or rebellious elements, even if they were peacefully protesting. For instance, in Makueni, some young men who were arrested during the protests came back to their villages and sensed that local elders viewed them with suspicion, as if they invited chaos. This stigma can impede reintegration; a victim might be shunned or not receive communal support. Conversely, families of those killed sometimes experience an outpouring of sympathy at first (such as well-attended funerals and local fundraising for burial costs), but as time passes, that support wanes and they may feel abandoned in their grief. Some

bereaved families withdrew from community life due to grief and possibly a subtle sense that others fear associating with them (especially if the case is high-profile and involves pending investigations).

There’s also a noted breakdown in community trust towards authorities. Many citizens, especially youth, now express an ingrained mistrust of the police and government institutions. This manifests as reluctance to report everyday crimes or engage in community policing initiatives, which can harm overall public safety. As one report noted, the repression “fractured relationships between citizens and law enforcement”, leaving many afraid to approach authorities even to report being victims of crime.

5.3. *Economic Impacts*

The financial toll on victims and their families has been staggering, compounding the physical and emotional harm with long-term economic distress. In nearly every region documented, survivors and their households face crippling medical costs, loss of income, and heightened vulnerability to poverty consequences that will likely endure for years without adequate support or

accountability. Medical expenses have emerged as one of the most immediate and devastating burdens. Survivors with gunshot wounds, fractures, or internal injuries often required multiple surgeries, prolonged hospital stays, and ongoing rehabilitation, including physiotherapy and pain management. These costs are overwhelmingly out-of-pocket, as public health facilities are often under-resourced or reluctant to record politically sensitive cases. Families were forced to sell assets, take on debt, or crowdsource funds simply to keep loved ones alive. In Nakuru, one victim required four surgeries after a rubber bullet caused severe intestinal damage; each step in his recovery exacted a heavy financial price.

Beyond healthcare, the loss of income and livelihoods has been catastrophic. Many victims were primary breadwinners, supporting entire families through casual labor, small businesses, or informal trade. When they were killed or incapacitated, their dependents faced instant economic precarity. For example, D.O’s mother in Kisumu not only lost her son to police bullets but also his critical support for his siblings’ school fees and the household’s daily needs. With

him gone, the family teeters on the brink of destitution. Others, like a 33-year-old laborer from Mathare, face chronic disability and economic marginalization. After being shot in the leg, he now walks with a limp and suffers from persistent pain, which has severely restricted the physical tasks he can perform. *“My income dropped to zero,”* he said, describing how he was left to depend on relatives and neighbors for food; a stark shift from someone who previously worked daily to sustain his household.

These financial consequences are not isolated incidents they represent a systemic economic backlash against protest participation or proximity. Even families who were not directly involved in demonstrations suffered when their homes were tear-gassed or their businesses destroyed, especially in towns like Makueni and Mombasa, where small traders lost property during police crackdowns. The economic fallout of the protests has created a silent crisis one that pushes already vulnerable households further into poverty, strips survivors of their autonomy and dignity, and places entire communities under sustained financial strain.

5.4. Health consequences.

Beyond psychological trauma and visible injuries, the protest crackdown in 2024 triggered a wide array of short- and long-term health consequences for survivors and bystanders. The intensive use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition had serious medical repercussions—some immediate, others chronic. Medical professionals, including public hospital doctors and volunteer medics, reported a surge in respiratory complications during and after protest episodes. Tear gas exposure often in densely populated, poorly ventilated areas led to exacerbated asthma attacks, acute bronchitis, severe coughing, and chest tightness, particularly among children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions. In some instances, chemical irritants

caused skin reactions and eye damage; several patients presented with what doctors described as mild chemical burns where tear gas canisters made direct contact with skin.

Over the longer term, permanent disabilities have emerged as some of the most devastating legacies. Survivors who sustained gunshot wounds or blunt trauma now live with amputations, mobility impairments, loss of eyesight, and chronic pain. In Mathare, for example, a young man shot in the leg has developed nerve damage and struggles with walking, while in Kibera, one woman lost vision in one eye after being struck by a canister. These health outcomes drastically diminish quality of life and limit victims’ ability to work, study, or participate fully in society.

6. Institutional Analysis in the wake of the 2024 Finance Bill protests

The protest crisis and ensuing human rights violations tested the performance of key institutions mandated to protect rights and ensure accountability. This section evaluates how four such actors i.e. the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), the National Police Service (NPS), and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) responded and performed in the face of these events.

6.1. *Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)*

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) played a vital role as the national statutory watchdog during the 2024 protest crisis, undertaking active monitoring and documentation of human rights violations across the country. KNCHR deployed investigators to protest hotspots such as Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Eldoret to observe demonstrations firsthand, interview victims, and verify reports of abuse. As a constitutionally mandated institution, its presence on the ground lent institutional legitimacy and credibility to claims of widespread violations. Through public statements, KNCHR strongly condemned the excessive use of force, calling on security agencies to uphold constitutional standards, and demanded accountability for unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, and the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians. In many respects, KNCHR served as the official witness to state conduct, ensuring that abuses were not dismissed as hearsay or isolated incidents. Their findings documented in field missions, public reports, and press briefings helped anchor the public debate in

verified evidence, contributing significantly to national and international awareness. Notably, KNCHR data and accounts were cited in reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (whose November 2024 report referenced KNCHR extensively), and local organizations such as Missing Voices. One positive aspect of KNCHR's performance was its collaboration with civil society organizations. Rather than operating in isolation, KNCHR worked alongside NGOs such as Amnesty Kenya, HRW, Haki Africa, and the Police Reforms Working Group. They convened post-protest stakeholder forums, allowing victims and survivors to speak directly to government officials and human rights actors. Though these forums yielded few immediate remedies, they were symbolically powerful, affirming victims' dignity and ensuring their voices were heard in formal spaces.

However, KNCHR's impact was constrained by *inter alia* its mandate. As an advisory and oversight body, it lacks prosecutorial authority and cannot independently punish perpetrators. After collecting evidence, KNCHR forwarded its findings to institutions with enforcement powers, such

as the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). It also called for the formation of an independent judicial commission of inquiry to investigate and address the abuses. While these referrals underscore KNCHR's commitment to justice, they also reveal the institutional bottlenecks that often stymie accountability in Kenya's governance ecosystem. KNCHR documented, verified, and spoke out. This helped define the authoritative scope and nature of state abuses, and kept the issue in the national conversation. However, its lack of enforcement powers means that its impact ultimately depends on the political will of the state. Without timely prosecutions, compensation schemes, or policy reforms, the Commission's reports risk being remembered as important historical records rather than catalysts for justice.

6.2. *Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA)*

The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) is the civilian oversight body legally mandated to investigate police misconduct and recommend prosecution or disciplinary action. The 2023–2024 Finance

Bill protests, which were marked by widespread allegations of police brutality, represented arguably the most severe challenge to IPOA's mandate since its inception. These events tested the Authority's capacity, independence, and public credibility.

During the height of the protests in June and July 2023/2024, IPOA's public visibility was notably limited. Unlike other institutions and civil society actors that quickly condemned the violence, IPOA refrained from issuing strong public statements. This silence disappointed many observers who expected a more assertive stance, given the gravity and scale of the alleged violations. The absence of immediate condemnation created a perception of institutional timidity or lack of urgency. Despite the muted public posture, IPOA did initiate investigations behind the scenes. In correspondence with Human Rights Watch, IPOA confirmed that it had recorded 67 protest-related deaths from March to July 2023, and had opened investigations into 55 of them. By late 2024, six of these cases had been referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) for possible inquests.

This demonstrates a degree of

responsiveness: acknowledging over 60 deaths and investigating the majority reflects institutional recognition of the crisis. However, the limited progression of cases with only six referred for inquest and none leading to murder or manslaughter charges. This highlights serious constraints in translating investigations into concrete accountability. This disconnect raises concerns about IPOA's effectiveness in delivering justice. Several structural and operational challenges undermined IPOA's performance. Firstly, IPOA is heavily reliant on cooperation from the police, who are often reluctant to provide timely information. Investigating police shootings typically requires ballistic evidence, internal records, and officer identification, all of which are vulnerable to delay or obstruction. Police resistance has long been a barrier to IPOA's mandate. Secondly, IPOA's capacity was overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis. With protests erupting across multiple counties, the sudden surge in serious cases strained their limited resources. While IPOA has regional offices, these are not present in every county, and in many instances, investigators faced delays in accessing protest scenes due to security concerns or logistical challenges. By the

time evidence could be collected, valuable time had often elapsed, reducing the quality and impact of investigations.

IPOA did announce several specific investigations into high-profile incidents, such as the fatal shooting of Wanjiru in Mlolongo and the deaths of infants exposed to tear gas in Kibera. By mid-2024, it reported dispatching teams to investigate protest-related deaths in Nyanza and Eastern provinces. While these announcements indicated responsiveness, many affected families viewed them as too little, too late. Interviews with victims' families revealed a lack of awareness about IPOA's role and frustration with limited communication. Several complainants who attempted to engage with IPOA reported unhelpful responses, delays, or an absence of updates. This eroded public confidence in IPOA's capacity to deliver justice and underscored the need for better victim engagement and transparency.

IPOA's performance during the Finance Bill protests reveals a mixed picture. The Authority took important investigative steps and demonstrated that it was not entirely inert. However, its muted public stance, operational delays, and inability to secure concrete

accountability outcomes reflect institutional weaknesses that must be addressed. If IPOA is to serve as a credible watchdog over police conduct, it must be better resourced, more independent, and more proactive in both communication and enforcement. Without such reforms, its legitimacy in the eyes of the public, especially victims of police violence, will remain tenuous.

6.3. *National Police Service (NPS)*

The National Police Service (NPS), comprising the Kenya Police Service, Administration Police Service, and specialized tactical units, was central both to the state's response to the Finance Bill protests and to the documented violations of human rights. Rather than upholding its constitutional duty to facilitate peaceful assemblies, NPS actions frequently violated constitutional and statutory safeguards. Available evidence reveals that the NPS largely failed to operate within constitutional and legal frameworks during the protests. Instead of distinguishing between peaceful protesters and isolated incidents of disorder, the police frequently treated the demonstrations as inherently violent. This resulted in a disproportionate use of

force from the outset. Patterns of abuse, including indiscriminate shootings, beatings, and arbitrary arrests, point to deeper institutional flaws. These include inadequate training in crowd control, breakdowns in command and control, or even willful and unlawful conduct. Critically, the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians, which left many shot in the head, chest, or back, cannot be justified under Kenyan law.

The Sixth Schedule of the National Police Service Act and the NPS Standing Orders strictly limit the use of lethal force to instances where it is necessary to protect life or prevent serious crimes. The fact that most victims posed no imminent threat and were still targeted with potentially fatal force suggests either a reckless disregard for the law or an implicit "shoot-to-kill" policy, as widely alleged by civil society and eyewitness accounts. The posture of police leadership during and after the protests exacerbated public distrust. The Inspector General (IG) and other senior officials repeatedly characterized protesters as looters or violent actors, implicitly justifying the violent crackdown. They failed to acknowledge wrongdoing or take proactive disciplinary measures

against officers implicated in abuses. In several cases, it took court orders to extract even minimal cooperation from police leadership. For instance, in habeas corpus proceedings filed by the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) concerning missing persons, judges were forced to compel the IG and Director of Criminal Investigations (DCI) to appear and provide information. Such reluctant compliance reveals a troubling institutional culture of impunity and resistance to oversight.

Notably, as of mid-2024, there were no public reports of suspensions, internal investigations, or reprimands linked to protest-related shootings further reinforcing the perception that NPS shields its own rather than enforcing accountability. The NPS also demonstrated a marked lack of effective non-lethal crowd control strategies. The routine use of tear gas and live ammunition paired with the near absence of de-escalation tactics such as negotiation teams or broader community engagement, suggests either a lack of preparedness or a policy choice favoring repression over dialogue. While water cannons were deployed in parts of Nairobi, these were the exception rather

than the norm. This failure points to deeper issues in police reform implementation. Despite significant efforts post-2010 Constitution to transform the police into a rights-respecting, service-oriented body, the operational reality during the protests reflected outdated, militarized approaches to public order. Perhaps most concerning was the involvement of plainclothes officers, some believed to be from paramilitary or anti-terror units, raising questions about the securitization of protest policing. When civilian demonstrations are treated as national security threats, it undermines the civilian nature of policing and risks eroding the constitutional right to peaceful assembly.

The conduct of the NPS during the Finance Bill protests reveals not just individual or tactical failures, but systemic institutional problems. From the excessive use of force and impunity at the top, to the apparent collapse of protest facilitation protocols, the police response reflected a regression from constitutional ideals. Addressing these failures requires urgent reforms: strengthening internal accountability, revamping crowd control training, demilitarizing protest response, and rebuilding

public trust through transparent investigations and justice for victims.

6.4. Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

The ODPP is responsible for prosecuting criminal cases, including those involving criminal conduct by police. Its role in this context would be to take up cases against officers who committed offenses (like murder, assault, etc.), as well as ensure that any charges against protesters are grounded in evidence and public interest.

Regrettably, the ODPP's track record is largely characterized by inaction (or very slow action) against abusive officers, and proceeding with charges against protesters that were arguably excessive. As noted earlier, by late 2024, only 6 cases of police killings had been referred to ODPP by IPOA for inquest, and none for direct prosecution. An inquest is fact-finding by a magistrate to determine cause of death often a precursor to deciding if someone should be charged. The ODPP could, in theory, direct that officers be charged without waiting for IPOA if evidence is available (for instance, from obvious cases caught on camera). But we haven't seen such assertiveness.

Instead, there's a sense that ODPP is taking a back seat, waiting for IPOA's final reports. This has resulted in a bottleneck in justice as families of victims are in legal limbo, with cases stuck at an "investigation" stage indefinitely.

ODPP was largely involved in processing cases after the protesters' arrests. Over 2,000 arrests occurred in 2024's protests. Most arrestees were released for lack of evidence or on low-level charges. The ODPP eventually withdrew many charges that were clearly untenable (for instance, 56 university students arrested in Nairobi had charges dropped in August 2024, recognizing they were peaceful protesters). However, this often happened after the fact, meaning people spent time in custody or on bond before the ODPP dropped charges. That indicates that the initial decision to charge might have been made under pressure or without rigorous review, leading to unnecessary prosecutions that wasted judicial time and traumatized the accused persons. Ideally, ODPP should have scrutinized police arrest reports and only charged where evidence of actual crimes (like vandalism, assault) existed. Instead, the pattern was mass

charges of “unlawful assembly” that eventually got withdrawn.

The ODPP so far has been presented by the documentation survivors as a weak link in the accountability chain. They neither swiftly prosecuted obvious instances of police crimes nor effectively filtered out baseless charges against civilians in the heat of the moment. The lack of prosecutions contributes to the culture of impunity and no hope for justice for many of the survivors.

7. International Comparisons in protest related human rights violations

Kenya’s experience with protest-related abuses and the struggle for accountability is sadly not unique. Around the world, numerous countries have faced similar episodes where security forces used excessive force against demonstrators, prompting public outcry and demands for justice. This section provides brief case studies from two contexts: Chile and Nigeria, highlighting how protest-related human rights abuses were addressed and whether they led to any formal accountability. These comparisons offer perspectives on possible paths Kenya could take (or avoid) in seeking justice for victims and reforming institutions.

7.1. Chile

Chile experienced massive nationwide protests in 2019 (sparked by a transit fare increase but tapping into deeper inequalities), which were met with harsh repression by Chilean security forces (Carabineros). The scale of violations was enormous: thousands were injured, dozens killed, and

notably, hundreds suffered eye injuries or blindness due to police firing rubber bullets and tear gas canisters at eye level. This led to an outcry both domestically and internationally.

In response, the Chilean government, under pressure, initiated a series of police reforms and accountability steps. A special council was convened in December 2019 by the Ministry of Interior and the Senate to propose urgent police reforms. Human Rights Watch and the UN Human Rights Office were invited and issued reports detailing the violations and needed changes. Some measures taken included: suspending the use of rubber pellet shotguns (which had caused most eye injuries), overhauling crowd-control protocols, and improving internal accountability mechanisms within Carabineros.

Criminal accountability, however, has been slower. Chilean prosecutors did open investigations into allegations of torture, sexual violence, and unlawful killings by officers. Four years on, progress has been

limited. Amnesty International reported that impunity persists and victims have yet to receive full reparations. Only a small number of officers have been charged, and trials are ongoing with few verdicts so far. However, it's notable that Chile's government acknowledged the abuses and made institutional changes: for example, several top Carabineros commanders resigned or were removed, and a new human rights training regimen was instituted for riot police.

Another significant outcome was that the public outrage fed into a process to rewrite Chile's constitution (a process that, while not directly delivering justice for past abuses, was seen as addressing the root socio-political issues that sparked the protests). The new constitution drafting process included debates on security sector reforms and stronger civilian oversight of police.

In Chile's case, there was an initial robust attempt at reform, such as establishing independent commissions, inviting international scrutiny, and updating rules of engagement thus signaling a willingness to learn from the debacle. However, accountability for past abuses (like prosecutions of

offending officers) has lagged, indicating how entrenched impunity can be. For Kenya, Chile's example suggests that formal accountability requires both high-level political will and persistent follow-through.

7.2. Nigeria

Nigeria's #EndSARS protests in October 2020 present a pertinent comparison. The protests were against police brutality, specifically the abuses of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The movement was largely youth-driven, peaceful, and nationwide. The government's response infamously culminated in the Lekki Toll Gate massacre on October 20, 2020, where soldiers (and later police) opened fire on unarmed peaceful protesters, killing and injuring many. The fallout was global condemnation.

Under both internal and international pressure, the Nigerian government took the step of establishing Judicial Panels of Inquiry in most states of the federation to investigate SARS abuses and the protest crackdown. These panels heard testimony from victims, families, and police over several months. The most notable was the Lagos State Judicial Panel, which in late 2021 delivered a report that officially confirmed that the

Nigerian Army and police killed unarmed protesters at Lekki and committed other abuses. It named victims and recommended a list of officers for prosecution, as well as compensation for victims.

Following the panels, some compensation has been paid out – many victims (or families) received monetary awards as recommended (the Lagos panel, for example, recommended compensation which the state government began paying to some petitioners). The Lagos panel alone awarded roughly ₦410 million (about \$1 million) to 70 victims of police brutality (pre-protest and during the protest). This is a form of formal accountability in terms of recognition of wrongs and attempt at reparation.

However, prosecutions have been scant. As of mid-2022, six months after the Lagos panel report, Human Rights Watch noted that authorities had made no real effort to prosecute those implicated. The federal government initially even denied the panel's findings. Public pressure forced the President to dissolve SARS and promise reform, but holding individuals accountable has stalled. A few low-ranking officers faced trial for unrelated incidents, but key officers from Lekki or

other incidents have not been brought to justice. Essentially, Nigeria's government accepted the recommendation for reforms and compensation but has largely shied away from criminal accountability.

Nigeria's case shows a model of formal process (judicial panels) acknowledging and documenting abuses, which is a form of accountability. It also delivered compensation to victims, a tangible outcome. However, the reluctance to prosecute

perpetrators demonstrates the challenge of converting truth-finding into justice. For Kenya, this suggests that setting up inquiries or commissions could play a role in acknowledgment and reparations (which Kenya hasn't done yet for the protest abuses), but without sustained political will, those responsible may evade justice.

Each country's context differs, but common threads emerge: transparency, independent inquiries, victim compensation,

and legal reforms are key to accountability. Chile prioritized institutional reform, Nigeria prioritized truth-finding and compensation Kenya can glean lessons from all three. For Kenya, establishing a public inquiry (like Nigeria) combined with strong civil litigation and judicial intervention and a commitment to police reform (like Chile attempted) could together forge a path to accountability and prevention of future abuses.

8. Recommendations

In light of the findings and analysis above, this report puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at achieving justice for the victims, instituting reforms to prevent recurrence, and restoring public trust. The recommendations are structured in three time-frames: short-term (immediate) actions, mid-term measures, and long-term reforms and are directed to specific stakeholders (government, police, judiciary, civil society, and international partners as appropriate).

8.1. Short-Term (Immediate) Actions

i. Prompt, Independent Investigations & Prosecutions: *Stakeholders: ODPP, IPOA, DCI.* Immediately prioritize thorough investigations into all protest-related deaths, injuries, and disappearances. The Director of Pub-

lic Prosecutions should constitute special task teams, working jointly with IPOA and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations dedicated exclusively to these cases. Their mandate should be to review all evidence (post-mortems, videos, witness accounts) and within 3–6 months initiate prosecutions for officers where there is prima facie evidence of wrongdoing. As a first step, clear-cut cases (e.g. shootings caught on camera, or where autopsy evidence is decisive) should lead to charges without delay. The ODPP should make a public progress report on these cases by the 6-month mark. This swift action would signal a break from impunity and demonstrate to both the public and the police rank-and-file that unlawful violence will be punished by law. To bolster these efforts, the DCI's Special Crime Unit should be tasked to support IPOA in gathering forensic evidence (ballistic matching of bullets to guns, etc.) in these cases.

ii. Medical and Psycho-Social Support for Victims: *Stakeholders: National Government (Ministry of Health, Interior), County Governments, NGOS.* Immediately set up an Emergency Victim Support Fund to assist those injured and the families of those killed. The government, in partnership with county au-

thorities from affected areas (e.g. Nairobi, Kisumu, etc.), should allocate budget to cover:

- a) Outstanding hospital bills for protest-related injuries (many victims are stuck with huge bills).
- b) Rehabilitation costs: physical therapy, mobility aids (crutches, wheelchairs, prosthetics) for those disabled.
- c) Counseling and mental health services: Provide free trauma counseling to survivors and families (possibly by engaging professional counselors via the Ministry of Health or NGOs).
- d) Funeral expenses for bereaved families: a one-time lump sum to each family that lost someone, to at least alleviate immediate financial strain. This fund should be operational within 1 month. County social workers can identify beneficiaries. Notably, some local steps have been taken (e.g. Kisumu's main hospital waived some initial treatment fees for victims) – the fund can reimburse and extend such efforts. While this support is not a substitute for legal compensation via courts, it is a humanitarian obligation to address urgent needs and signal that the state cares for its citizens.

iii. Suspend and Discipline Officers Implicated in Killings/Brutality. *Stakeholders: National Police Service (Inspector General, Internal Affairs Unit), National Police Service Commission.* As investigations proceed, any police officer for whom there is credible evidence of involvement in unlawful killings, torture or other serious viola-

tions should be immediately removed from active duty pending the outcome. The National Police Service Commission, together with the IG, has the authority to interdict or suspend officers under investigation. This should be applied to, for example, officers captured on video shooting protesters, commanders who authorized live fire contrary to orders, or those identified by witnesses. Such administrative action is vital to prevent potential cover-ups or further misconduct (it keeps accused officers from interfering with witnesses or evidence). It also shows the public that the police are not above the law. In addition, the NPS should immediately disband or bench any specialized units that were deployed in the protests pending a tactical review. For instance, if a particular riot squad or a “special team” was involved in abuses, stand them down and scrutinize their conduct and command structure. These immediate disciplinary measures, even before court verdicts, are justified by the gravity of allegations and will help restore some faith in the service's willingness to self-correct.

iv. Public Apology and Acknowledgment by Government: Although not a legal step, a formal acknowledgment of the pain caused can be powerful. The President (or at least the Cabinet Secretary for Interior) should issue a public statement acknowledging that excessive force was used and expressing condolences to families of those killed and support for those injured. Civil society statements have repeatedly called on President Ruto

to acknowledge and apologize. Doing so would set the stage for reconciliation and indicate a commitment to reform. It's a short-term action that can help diffuse tension and show empathy, which has so far been lacking.

8.2. Mid-Term Measures

v. Legal Reforms to Align Statutes with the Constitution's Protection of Protests: *Stakeholders: Parliament (Justice and Legal Affairs Committee), Kenya Law Reform Commission, Attorney General.* Within the next year, review and amend laws that are outdated or that have been misused to suppress lawful protests. Key targets:

a. Public Order Act (Cap. 56): Amend Section 5(2) which has been misinterpreted to require permits for public gatherings. Make it explicit that only prior notification (not permission) is needed, in line with Article 37. Include clauses that forbid unreasonable conditions on protests by authorities (e.g., blanket bans, arbitrary "demonstration zones" which courts have noted can violate rights). Also codify that dispersal of assemblies should be a last resort and only if there is a clear and present danger of violence, and even then, force used must be proportional. These amendments would remove grey areas that police exploit to declare gatherings "unlawful".

b. National Coroners Service Act, 2017: This Act, meant to ensure independent investigation of deaths should be fully implemented. The government should within months operationalize the National Coroners Service, appoint the Chief Coroner and

gazette coroner's offices across counties. This will take the role of determining cause of death in cases like protest shootings away from the police (who currently handle inquests) to an independent authority. An active Coroner's Service can ensure every police shooting death undergoes impartial forensic examination, which greatly aids accountability.

c. Victim Compensation Mechanism: Draft and pass legislation to establish an independent victim compensation fund or tribunal for those harmed by state actions. While victims can sue in court (as some are doing), a systematic mechanism where an independent panel can quickly award compensation for injury or death caused by police would provide relief faster and more consistently. This could be modeled on how some countries handle crime victims' compensation or on recommendations from the (stalled) Reparations for Historical Injustices framework. It should complement, not replace, the courts: victims retain the right to sue for higher damages, but this provides an accessible avenue especially for those who can't afford long legal battles.

vi. Strengthen Oversight Bodies (IPOA and KNCHR): *Stakeholders: Executive (Interior Ministry), Parliament, IPOA & KNCHR leadership.* In the medium term, take steps to bolster the capacity and teeth of oversight institutions:

a) Increase funding and staffing for IPOA specifically to handle the case load from the 2023–24 protests. Perhaps set up a special IPOA task force with dedicated

investigators for this purpose. Funding could be reallocated or supplemented in the next budget cycle to ensure these cases move faster.

- b) Consider legislative amendments to give IPOA more powers. For example, power to independently prosecute certain offenses if ODPP fails to act (somewhat akin to how anti-corruption commission had prosecutorial powers in some countries). At minimum, ensure police cooperation by making it an offense for any police officer or institution to ignore IPOA summons or withhold information (IPOA Act already criminalizes non-compliance, but enforcement of that could be emphasized).
- c) Support KNCHR in establishing a permanent Protest Monitoring Program, which can train and deploy monitors nationwide whenever large protests are anticipated. This will institutionalize the monitoring that KNCHR had to do ad-hoc. By mid-term, KNCHR should also be tasked with following up on the implementation of recommendations; perhaps Parliament can require the Interior CS to report on measures taken in response to KNCHR findings, giving KNCHR a formal feedback loop.

vii. Regular Reporting and Transparency:

Stakeholders: NPS, Ministry of Interior, Parliament. To avoid future cover-ups, institutionalize transparency. For instance, require the Inspector General of Police to submit an annual report to Parliament on all incidents of death or serious injury caused by police. This report should detail each protest-related

incident and the status of investigations or disciplinary actions. Parliament's security committee should review it and hold public hearings. Similarly, the Ministry of Interior should publish statistics on crowd control operations (e.g., how many live rounds expended during protests, etc.), data that can inform oversight and reforms. Transparency acts as a deterrent: if officers know their actions will be catalogued and reviewed publicly, they may exercise more caution.

8.3. Long-Term Reforms

i. Institutional Police Reforms and Culture Change:

Stakeholders: National Police Service, Police Service Commission, Civil Society. Over several years, Kenya needs to foster a policing culture that values restraint and human rights. This involves:

- a) Ingrain human rights in promotion criteria: officers with multiple use-of-force incidents or rights complaints should not be promoted until cleared; conversely, reward officers who handle protests without violence.
- b) Continue modernizing equipment and techniques so that the default is not live ammunition. Possibly explore acquiring body-worn cameras for officers during operations as evidence shows that when officers wear cameras, use-of-force incidents decrease (and where they don't, the footage aids accountability).
- c) Maintain a relatively high ratio of police to public order events. One lesson from 2024 is that deploying overwhelmed or under-trained officers led to panic and excessive

force. Long-term planning should ensure units like the Public Order Management Unit are well-trained, adequately staffed, and only as forceful as absolutely necessary.

d. Institutionalize Protester Safeguards:

Consider establishing permanent frameworks like a “Protest Coordination Committee” comprising police, civil society, and maybe judiciary observers, that gets activated during major announced protests to ensure communication and prevent violence. This could be an innovative approach where, say, ahead of a planned nationwide protest, this committee meets to set ground rules: protest organizers commit to peace, police commit to restraint, a hotline is set for emergencies, etc. It sounds idealistic, but it could help. Kenya’s long-term stability would benefit from creating channels for dissent that do not lead to bloodshed.

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