

# KENYA

Schools in the northeast of the country faced attacks by suspected non-state armed group fighters. In addition, attacks on school students and teachers persisted at a similar rate in 2022 and 2023 as compared to the previous two years. Police continued to use excessive force during higher education protests.

## CONTEXT

Fighting between government military forces and the non-state armed group al-Shabaab continued in northeastern Kenya and escalated in 2023.<sup>1</sup> Based in Somalia, al-Shabaab conducted attacks across the border in Kenya.<sup>2</sup> In 2023, Kenya and Somalia planned to reopen border crossings after more than a decade of closure; however, Kenya suspended the plans amid increased attacks, according to *Al Jazeera* and *VOA*.<sup>3</sup> In August 2022, Kenya held elections and William Ruto was elected president.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Shabaab conducted targeted attacks against security forces and civilians in Mandera, Lamu, and Garissa counties during the reporting period, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).<sup>5</sup> Many of these attacks involved the use of explosive weapons.<sup>6</sup> For instance, International Crisis Group (ICG) and ACLED reported that al-Shabaab carried out attacks on civilian infrastructure using explosive weapons in Mandera county in October 2022.<sup>7</sup> Counterinsurgency initiatives in Somalia allegedly pushed al-Shabaab militants across the border in 2023, leading to an uptick in armed violence in Kenya.<sup>8</sup>

Police used excessive force against protesters during anti-government demonstrations in 2023.<sup>9</sup> In July 2023, protests took place over increasing taxes; police responded with disproportionate force, including teargas, killing more than 20 people and arresting approximately 300, according to ICG and ACLED.<sup>10</sup>

In 2023, Kenya hosted more than 623,000 refugees and asylum seekers primarily from Somalia and South Sudan, according to the UN.<sup>11</sup> More than 2.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance that year, including over 1.3 million children.<sup>12</sup> Climate shocks exacerbated the humanitarian situation; approximately 187,000 children were displaced in 2022 due to climate disasters.<sup>13</sup> In 2023, floods displaced approximately 36,000 people and killed more than 45, according to Save the Children.<sup>14</sup> In the northwest, ongoing drought increased intercommunal tensions between pastoralists and landowners.<sup>15</sup>

Climate shocks and other factors limited education access during the reporting period. In 2023, more than 3.5 million school-aged children were out of school due to drought.<sup>16</sup> Rates of child marriage increased during the drought, affecting girl students, according to the UN.<sup>17</sup> A dearth of teachers, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of meals provided by schools also drove high dropout rates during the reporting period.<sup>18</sup> In addition, insecurity created by banditry and cattle rustling in the North Rift region prevented students from accessing learning.<sup>19</sup>

## ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified four reported attacks on schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This represents an increase compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA collected zero reported attacks in 2021 and 2020.<sup>20</sup>

In 2022, GCPEA identified two attacks on schools, both of which occurred in Mandera county in the northeast of the country:

- On October 12, 2022, alleged non-state armed group fighters staged an attempted attack on Libehiya Primary School in Libehiya, Mandera county, in the middle of the night, as reported by local media outlet *Nation*.<sup>21</sup>
- On October 25, 2022, alleged non-state armed group fighters reportedly threw explosives into Fino Primary School in Lafey, Mandera county. At the time, students and teachers had formed an audience for an event with a local politician. One student was injured, as reported by local media outlet *Nation*.<sup>22</sup>

In 2023, GCPEA identified two attacks on schools, both of which occurred in Lamu county, near the border with Somalia:

- On July 11, 2023, suspected non-state armed group fighters attacked Juhudi Primary School in Juhudi village, Lamu county, when it was being used as a shelter for displaced people, as reported by local media outlet *Nation*.<sup>23</sup>
- Also at Juhudi Primary School, suspected non-state armed group fighters attempted an attack on August 24, 2023, while the school was being used as a shelter for displaced people, as reported by local media outlet *Star*.<sup>24</sup>

## ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

In 2022 and 2023, GCPEA collected six reports of attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel. In comparison, GCPEA collected three and two reported attacks in 2021 and 2020, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

In 2022, GCPEA identified one report of an attack on school students:

- On May 12, 2022, police fired teargas at and arrested students demonstrating in Garissa town and county for the removal of the principal of County High School, as reported by local media outlet *Star*. The students reportedly threw stones.<sup>26</sup>

In 2023, GCPEA identified five reports of attacks on school students and personnel.<sup>27</sup> For instance:

- On July 12, 2023, police reportedly threw teargas into Kihumbulni Primary School in Kangemi, Nairobi city and county, while responding to a nearby protest. 50 students present in classrooms were taken to hospi-

tals due to breathing difficulties, as reported by local media outlet *Star*.<sup>28</sup>

- On September 20, 2023, suspected non-state armed group fighters killed a security guard at Majembeni Primary School in Widhu, Lamu county, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>29</sup>
- On October 16, 2023, police fired teargas at teachers who were protesting against their dismissal by the Teachers Service Commission in Upper Hill, Nairobi city and county, as reported by a local media outlet. Ten teachers were reportedly arrested.<sup>30</sup>

## ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2022 and 2023, GCPEA collected eight reports of attacks on higher education. This trend of sporadic attacks is similar to previous years; GCPEA collected approximately five reported attacks each year in 2021 and 2020.<sup>31</sup>

In 2022, GCPEA identified two reports of attacks on higher education, both of which affected students:

- On March 26, 2022, police threw teargas at Maseno University students who were protesting campus insecurity by blocking a road in Maseno town, Kisumu county, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>32</sup>
- On December 5, 2022, police shot and killed a student during a protest over insecurity at Machakos University in Machakos town and county, as reported by *Scholars at Risk*.<sup>33</sup>

In 2023, GCPEA identified six reports of attacks on higher education, all of which involved students.<sup>34</sup> For instance:

- On March 20, 2023, police threw teargas and shot live bullets at Maseno University students who were throwing stones and protesting the high cost of living on campus in Maseno town, Kisumu county, as reported by *Scholars at Risk*. One student was reportedly shot dead, and others injured.<sup>35</sup>
- On April 4, 2023, police reportedly threw teargas at University of Kabianga students protesting student loan delays and university fees in Kabianga, Kericho county. The students clashed with police, blockaded a road, and lit bonfires in protest, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>36</sup>
- On May 24, 2023, police threw teargas at Kisumu National Polytechnic College students who protested high university fees and canteen prices in Kisumu city and county, as reported by *Scholars at Risk* and a local media outlet. The students reportedly threw stones and blockaded roads outside the campus.<sup>37</sup>
- On November 2, 2023, police reportedly threw teargas at Machakos University students who were protesting student loan delays in Machakos town and county.<sup>38</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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