

The Recent Police Brutality in Kenya

By Shama Shah

As the media, rights groups and civilians roared with anger, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta apologized for the police brutality encountered during the curfew enforcement in the past week. Words of apology, and assurance for the future, do not rationalize the despicable actions of the police, and means little to nothing to those victims who suffered directly or indirectly from this violence. Incidences were reported in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and Mombasa (however it may well be countrywide) which ranged from yelling, robbing, beating, using tear gas and firing live bullets. 3 Kenyans have sadly lost their lives, including a young teenager who was shot in the stomach in Mombasa; and scores injured.

This is certainly not the first time Kenyan police have acted in such a manner - their actions were reminiscent of the brutality they unleashed in the post-election violence in 2017. Dr. Steve Maraboli stated "if they do it often, it is not a mistake; it's just their behavior". This is a scary notion.

Undeniably, police brutality is not a "Kenyan thing". World over there are daily incidences of police acting in an abusive manner towards (usually) harmless civilians. The issue is so dire that studies have been conducted to find the motivation behind such behavior. Some reasons include lack of adequate training, lack of accountability and the militarization of police (viewing citizens as adversaries instead of the people they're meant to "protect and serve").

We are already afraid of the invisible enemy, COVID-19. Is it not enough that Kenyans are losing their jobs and family members are falling ill that we must now fear attacks from the police? The very people that swore to protect us. Is it not enough that we have started burying loved ones who succumbed to the virus, that we must bury those who are murdered at the hands of police? And is it not enough that at a time that we are supposed to be coming together as a country, we are being torn apart from within?

This article is not written to debate causes for police brutality, it is an urgent plea to Kenyan police to totally refrain from violence, and to respect and protect us, the citizens of the Great Nchi Ya Kenya.