

The Political Crises and Deterioration of Law and Order in Kenya, 1934 -1952

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of law and order in colonial Kenya between 1934 and 1952 when the colonial state declared a state of emergency in the colony. This was the period of widespread uprising in many parts of the colony and the collapse of law and order in 1952 must be seen as a culmination of the unrest that had been simmering in the colony for close to two decades before 1952. The paper challenges the historiography of decolonization, which does not link the declaration of Emergency with historical dynamics in other parts of Kenya during the stated period. It is the view of this paper that the roots of the political crisis that set off in 1952 had its foundation in the social economic and political contestations between the colonial government and Africans.

Keywords: State of Emergency, Mau Mau, Ordinance.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the declaration of the State of Emergency, there was a lot of political agitation and social unrest in many parts Kenya. These activities threatened the stability of the colonial government to the core. It has also shown that the African political parties were banned and declared illegal as a strategy of dominating Africans. The colonial government was gradual but systematic in preparation for the State of Emergency. Legal mechanisms had been put in place to criminalize the activities of the Africans. Governor Baring declaration of the State of Emergency on October 20 1952 was simply an attempt to re-assert the authority of the colonial state, which by then was at the lowest point, was the final blow to the Mau Mau. The State of Emergency paved way for the creation of villages, barbed enclosures and detention camps to help manage and stamp out the Mau Mau rebellion. They were also used as tools of confinement, control and domination. The State of Emergency legitimized murder and detention of the Mau Mau fighters. The security agents were empowered to arrest and execute all people who did not follow the Emergency regulations.

PRELUDE TO THE EMERGENCY

There is tendency by those engaged in the historiography of Kenya's decolonization process to look at 20 October 1952 as the date the laws of the State of Emergency of the colony were issued but in reality, the said rules and regulations were based on "Emergency Powers Order in Council of 1939 issued under Legal Notice No. L & O.18/5/ii [1]. It is worth

noting that preparation for the state of Emergency begun in 1938. What Governor Baring did was not new he only made the State of Emergency official in 1952. The enactment of the Emergency Power Ordinance of 1938 was supposed to secure public safety, the maintenance of public order and the suppression of disturbances, riot or rebellion that arose from political agitation [2]. The provisions of the Ordinance were:

To prohibit the buying or selling of, or any other dealings in, arms, firearms or explosives, to prohibit the carrying of arms, fire arms explosives, sticks, missiles or any other weapon and to provide for the arrest (without a warrant) and the detention of any person committing any act of intimidation or violence [3].

The Ordinance also provided that any premises suspected of being used for purpose likely to endanger the public safety or to incite any person to commit any act of such a nature as would likely to endanger public safety may be entered and searched without a warrant. Anything found therein which was suspected of being used for such purpose as previously mentioned would be confiscated. In addition, the Ordinance also provided for the imposition and enforcement of curfew; all in a bid to stem Mau Mau activities [4].

Political agitation was experienced as early as the 1930s due to inadequacy of land because the African reserves were heavily degraded by the 1930s due to overgrazing and overpopulation. The colonial

government appointed the Kenya Land Commission popularly identified with the name of its chairman Morris Carter in April 1932. It was mandated to make a full inquiry into the problem of land in the colony. Basically its tasks were three-fold: to look into African land grievances and the extent to which they emanated from previous alienation of land to Europeans, to make recommendations on how well to tackle these grievances and, finally, to make a full assessment on African land requirements making suggestions on the ways and means of satisfying them. The inquiry was to proceed province by province and ethnic community by tribe [5].

The appointment of Kenya Land Commission created great expectation and hope among the Africans. The Commission heard 736 witnesses, including 487 Africans and 94 European administrators, past and present. The Commission's reply on the land issues to the Kikuyu took up one third of their reports. The Commission doubted whether any Kikuyu had actually purchased land from the Okiek [6]. The Carter Commission rejected the *githaka* concept, thereby avoiding awarding any land compensation to individuals. They found the Kikuyu evidence conflicting, exaggerated, and estimated that only the government for white settlement had alienated some 60,000 acres of their land. The commission legalized the closing of the frontier ethnic community boundaries. They also upheld the privileged position Europeans enjoyed in the white highlands from Kiu in Machakos to Fort Ternan in Nyanza. The report of the Kenya Land Commission was accepted by the British and colonial governments. Between 1938 and 1944, various Orders in Council and local Ordinances affecting both land and labour issues were enacted to implement its recommendations. The Kikuyu refused to accept the recommendation of the report [7].

The Kenya Land Commission in its report of 1934 failed to offer a solution to the growing demand for more land by the Africans. For instance, it blamed Africans for their own predicament. The Commission claimed the land issues had more to do with the poor methods of land utilization in African reserves. The government failure to offer a solution led to serious political agitation. During the same period, there were many disturbances on the African economic way of life. The colonial government called on pastoralists to destock, accusing them of keeping large uneconomic herds [8].

On 13 October 1934, the Kikuyu political leaders condemned the Commission's proposals that heightened political tension in their areas. Land was among many grievances on which nationalism was pegged. Land became a key political issue [9]. It is in the context of this resentment and political tension that

the State of Emergency Ordinance of 1939 was enacted and from which the draconian laws of 1952 were drawn. The Governor had the powers to enact other laws he deemed necessary to stem and eliminate the Mau Mau and deploy the military in aid of the civil administration without reference to Whitehall. The emergency laws aim was that the police, assisted by the military, could reassert colonial authority among the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. The emergency measures were systematically organized [10]. Following the signing of an agreement between Kenya and Liebig Meat Factory in December 1936, the administration initiated a destocking campaign in earnest, and especially in areas where overstocking was deemed serious [11].

Political agitation was more intense in Central Province. The war period 1939 to 1945, saw little political activity in the country. During this time, African political movements had been suppressed and their leaders arrested while the activities of their followers were driven underground. When the war ended, the leaders of KCA, the UMA and the THA were released from detention [12]. From 1944, the old hydra showed up again. Now the colonial government was faced with the old problems, which had been shelved for a long time. With the returning of the soldiers Africans were now re-motivated to continue opposing the white administration through tribal organization. During the period African leaders, for the first time, came together and formed a wide political party, the KAU to champion their demands [13].

There were many political or semi political societies. People seemed to be fully engaged in underground organizations such as the KCA and the Mau Mau this is because of landlessness and unemployment of Africans. Mau Mau seemed to have begun between 1946 and 1947. An underground movement rose because of squatters being evicted from the European farms following labourer's strikes and reported incidences of underground Oathing. The eviction of squatters was a crime in that the evictees in most cases were removed without prior arrangements being made for their future. The overall effect was that the Kikuyu begun organizing themselves secretly to bring change by force of arms since peaceful means had failed. They began administering oaths to register support and commit their people to the course. Oathing was not a new activity since it was an ordeal in most of the pre-colonial societies as discussed in a previous chapter but the colonial government viewed it as atavistic and a crime. The post - war oathing was administered to the Kikuyu squatters in the Rift Valley Province and the Kikuyu reserves, Kiambu, Fort Hall and Nyeri [14].

Resistance broke throughout the Highlands of Kenya. Political agitation was started by KCA and taken to a greater height by the formation of the first legal African organization; the Kenya African Study Union after the Second World War. It should be noted that this was a period of increased mass political agitation from the ex-service men of the Second World War and Nationalists. This political organization was a predecessor of the Kenya African Union KAU in 1944. It comprised of Kikuyu as members and their objective in the party was to articulate the need for better living and working conditions for Africans. Because of this, the colonial government banned KCA and KAU, which were the mouthpieces for the Africans to air their grievances. Religious movements and organizations were also banned they included Dini ya Msambwa and Dini ya Yesu Kristo [15].

This was a strategy to weaken the Africans against the resistance. Anyone who defied the ban ended up in detention camps. Despite this attempt, Africans were not cowed by the colonial threats instead they were motivated to continue with the agitation. KAU demanded the abolition of forced labour and the *kipande* system, self-government for Africans, seats in the Legislative Council and equality in the wages and salaries among all races. Fred Kubai, Bildad Kaggia and Paul Ngei led the call. Because of this development, another new militant group the Mau Mau emerged [16]. Members of this group were young men who had undergone circumcision in 1940s [17].

In addition, there was massive oath taking in central province. The colonial government viewed this group as gangs and thugs whose place was detention camps. The Mau Mau was forced to operate in secret as it was a radical force combining some of the characteristics of militant nationalism and an underground peasant movement. It was motivated by specific local grievances and at the same time led by a group of activists who were becoming increasingly nationalistic. From the onset the activists demonstrated a determination of use of force to achieve their goals [18]. By 1950, for the first time the squatters resistance went beyond civil disobedience to begin deploying force and sabotage against Europeans in the highlands. This campaign of direct action was organized through massive oathing to enhance unity of militants. John Mwirigi Chege a former Mau Mau fighter narrated:

By the end of 1949 very few people took the oath, only the ones who were intelligent and trust worthy were given. To begin with the oath was meant to train and recruit oath administrators who would help in the successful oathing [19].

The oath was meant to keep the activities of Mau Mau secret. The scale of the oathing made Mau Mau detention unavoidable. The Oath was vital among the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru [20]. The colonial government it was a thorn in its flesh, the Mau Mau were referred to as a criminal gang and thugs who were against the colonial policy of governance. In May 1950, Africans were arrested in connection with the oathing ceremony in Naivasha. The colonial government started expelling all the Kikuyu from various parts of the Rift Valley.

In April-May 1950 there was unearthing of mass oathing campaign. It came as a major shock to government officials and settlers [21]. For the first time, the colonial administration got to know that Mau Mau represented a serious threat to law and order. A government security conference was convened in Nakuru Town on 27 November 1950. The Provincial Commissioner attended it for the Rift Valley, the Attorney-General, and the Chief Native Commissioner, senior police, labour officers and representatives of the European settler community [22]. The senior labour officers of Rift Valley introduced communal fines, flogging, power to summarily evict suspects from the settled areas and the introduction of vigorous propaganda campaigns. The police arrested any person whose arrest warrant had been issued. The colonial government devised a strategy to counter the increasing defiance from the Africans; any desertion from employment was a serious matter to the colonial government. Deserters would not be allowed to go unpunished because agriculture and other industries of the colony would get into the state of chaos [23].

The colonial Secretary through the Attorney General prepared a new code and other related laws. It gave provisions for flogging and whipping and other corporal punishment. These measures were against any person who resisted colonial administration. It also authorized the introduction of detention camps. Later on the government replaced flogging with caning as the official description of the punishment [24]. 4530 Africans were imprisoned for an average of 30 days for offences against the Master and Servant Ordinance of 1910 and the Native Registration Ordinance. The Native authority Passes, Hut and Poll Tax and Gambling Ordinances were important. These ordinances would make it possible to deal with the great majority of offences. The ordinances would be implemented through detention camps. Detention camps were institutions of criminals imprisoned without trial. At this period there was no legal representation of criminals in court therefore the colonial government applied this draconian measures to counter the increased insecurity.

Between 1950 and 1951, there was a rise in political agitation and the militarization of the Africans. The Europeans could not understand this. European settlers consolidated their position and assumed complete control over squatters. Most of the squatters saw this move as a step against Africans living in settlers farms. Settlers established close collaborations with local officials. The police and European settlers created a harsh climate of law and order enforcement. Security and Economic motives converged in the drive to destroy the influence of the troublemakers [25]. The colonial government was determined to restore law and order during the state of emergency.

The Kikuyu also began openly disobeying and preaching against government orders. Mass resistance to government agricultural policies in the rural areas, urban strikes and political demonstration were staged. Kikuyu in Nyeri and Fort Hall openly opposed the soil conservation policies that the government had introduced as a remedy for the serious soil erosion of the African areas. The administrative annual reports for 1947 and 1948 also indicated that political unrest and stoppage of terracing in Central Province were spurred by “unscrupulous agitations [26].”

In 1947 the “Anake a forty group” which comprised of ex-servicemen was formed. The young men could not accept the governments’ repressive methods in the reserves. This group of young men that had been circumcised in 1940s, hence the name “anake a forty” had seen action in Ethiopia, Madagascar, India and Burma. They started to violently oppose trench digging going on in the Kikuyu reserves. They openly opposed the chiefs who were viewed as the *mzungu* mouthpieces. The chiefs were ready to obey any *mzungu* order without questioning rationality of the orders issued [27]. From 1950, just before the declaration of the State of Emergency chiefs became the targets of attack by the Mau Mau. The first target was Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of Kiambu on 7 October 1952. The administrators interpreted the death of Waruhiu as political murder of colonial agents of control. Its impact reverberated across the colony. Chief Waruhiu had resisted Mau Mau because they challenged his authority. His assassination demanded a ruthless response [28]. Besides political assassinations, Europeans on isolated farms were also attacked. By the end of 1952, 121 loyal Kikuyu had been murdered, including the influential Chief Nderi of Nyeri [29].

Evelyn Baring declared the State of Emergency shortly after he arrived in Kenya in 1952. He made a tour to Central Province and held meetings with chiefs, missionaries, headmen, African administrative officers, settlers and of course members of the Provincial Administration. The government as significant considered his visit because this was the

home base of Mau Mau fighters. After assessing, the situation—he realized that a state of anarchy existed in the region, was pervasive, and could only be arrested and reversed through a declaration of a State of Emergency [30]. On 10 October 1952, he requested the Secretary of State for Colonies to allow him declare a State of Emergency. In his reply on 14 October 1952, the Secretary of State for the colonies stated:

I approve your proposal to declare State of Emergency under Emergency powers Order in Council of 1939, and to take action against Kenyatta and his henchmen. I shall give you my full support in thus maintaining law and order [31]. This led to the arrest and incarceration of about 24,000 Africans who were confined in crowded camps, which served as prison institutions [32]. These laws and regulations had been enacted in 1939 following political agitation of the Kamba, Samburu and Taita over the destocking policies [33]. The granted laws of State of Emergency were declared on 20 October 1952. Jomo Kenyatta, Achieng Onoko, Kungu Karumba, Bildad Kagia, Fred Kubai and Paul Ngei were arrested and detained at the Kapenguria detention camp. This was a colonial strategy of isolating and punishing the alleged Mau Mau leaders. Their arrest alarmed the rest of the population in Central Kenya.

During this period, draconian measures such as beating, rape, arrest and indiscriminate shooting from the colonial security forces went a long way in fanning the rebellion. The State of Emergency resulted in a sharp increase in prison population and staff. Additional European security staffs were recruited from the United Kingdom to handle the increased number of Mau Mau fighters. As of July 1953, the Governor had signed 1,550 detention orders with the number increasing exponentially in the years ahead [34]. Out of the 622 prisoners who were hanged during the year, 605 of them were freedom fighters. The camps at Manyani and Mackinon Road were utilized as special Detention camps (otherwise known as Reception camps) [35].

The new laws issued allowed compulsory seizure of property and extension of collective punishment. These led to the legalizing of the actions taken by security forces especially after the murder of the government loyalists [36]. Sentences were increased; those convicted as members of the Mau Mau were incarcerated for fourteen years imprisonment instead of seven. The death penalty was to be imposed on convicts of oath administration [37]. Between November 1952 and March 1953, between 70,000 and 100,000 Kikuyu returned to Kiambu, Nyeri and Muranga from parts of Rift Valley [38]. Oral sources give graphic description of how the State of Emergency was conducted. Mbugua Wa Kahiu and James Mbanya aver:

The state of emergency was very bad in the sense that people did not know what was going to happen from one minute to the next. Danger lurked everywhere; in houses, offices, markets places and businesses, on roads, railway stations and trains. The country was filled with a situation of confusion. We saw degrading punishment as state of emergency meant tougher measures to curb the state of lawlessness in the country. The British troops and the home guards were instructed to shoot anyone who resisted arrest; A woman who resisted raping; a worker who demanded payment of his wages or salary from his employer; a person who happened to argue unnecessarily with a European on any matter was killed and in many occasions identified as a "terrorist" [39].

It is very evident from the Emergency powers Ordinance of 1952 that the colonial government was determined to destroy the Mau Mau fighters. This was a period that witnessed many atrocities on the Africans. The colonial officers, the Home Guards, the tribal police and chiefs would forcefully enter into the African premises at any time. There was no freedom of confidentiality and privacy. The ordinance created tension and uncertainty in the country. It was structured in such a way that the collective Punishment Ordinance of 1930 supported it [40]. It is important to note that Mau Mau had different shades from those who were hard-core especially those that had taken oath and were oath administrators in Central Province. This was the group referred to during the screening exercise as *Makara*- Kikuyu name for charcoal whose colour was pitch black signifying, that they could not betray the Mau Mau movement and extremely difficult to interrogate. There were others referred to as Grey who could easily be swayed under pressure to denounce Mau Mau and join the loyalists. The final classification was the White – those who had been swept into detention camps by the colonial forces even when they did not have anything to do Mau Mau.

William Mburu Gitau explain these descriptions as such: In the screening exercise Mau Mau rebels were identified by loyal hooded men who slipped on a gunny bag which had small perforations to enable them identify Mau Mau without the latter getting to know the accuser. This sackcloth gave the hooded men the term *gakunia* derived from a Swahili name *ngunia*-gunny bag. The Mau Mau had to undergo screening before detention. This screening grouped Mau Mau into: "white" Mau Mau these ones denounced the oath and were termed by the *mzungu* as good people. The "Grey" Mau Mau these ones were neither bad nor good. They could easily reform. Finally the

black Mau Mau were the worst, deemed dangerous and could not denounce the oath [41]. The Emergency powers Ordinance of 1950 stated:

Whenever the governor is satisfied for the purpose of maintaining public order, it is necessary to exercise control over any person. The governor may make an order (herein after called a detention order) against any such person directing that he be detained, and there upon such a person shall be arrested and detained. At any time after a detention order has been made against any person, the governor may revoke or vary the order, or may direct that the operation of the order be suspended subject to such condition; imposing upon such a person such restriction as may be specified in the direction in respect to his employment or business and in respect of his business, of his place of residence, and in respect of his association or communication with other persons. Prohibiting him from being out of doors between such hours as may be specified except with the authority of a written permit granted by such authority or person as may be specified [42].

The colonial government used the so-called maintenance of law and order ideology but in real sense, this was a strategy of control and domination to destroy the Mau Mau who claimed to be fighting for their *githaka*-land. To enforce the detention orders the colonial government established the "screening teams" which were led by the European District Officers, three labour officers and nine European members of KPR. In British colonial Kenya, screening was the preferred term for interrogation. To screen meant to get information from a Mau Mau suspect and, as the Emergency were on to persuade him or her to confess Mau Mau affiliation. When interrogations of Mau Mau suspects by colonial officials turned bloody, screening took on a more sinister connotation. For former Mau Mau adherents and even for those Kikuyu who never took the oath, screening was indiscriminate, and no one escaped it. The practice began not long after the start of the emergency. When the British security forces, European settlers, African loyalists, and the Kenya police force together spearheaded a campaign to interrogate anyone suspected of Mau Mau involvement. No Kikuyu, Embu and Meru man, women or child – was safe from the screening teams [43]. One George Wakaba Mugo, an informant said the following about the screening:

One thing I will never forget is screening. Those European officers were never satisfied; they just wanted more information from me, which I did not have. They severely beat me both in the police station

and detention village. Screening was hell [44]. The Africans were hustled out of their houses and herded into barbed-wire compounds where they waited for the cogs of colonial bureaucracy to turn [45]. The screeners sought to get intelligence especially information about future Mau Mau operations, guerrilla support in the reserves and in the settler's farms, and names of other Mau Mau particularly passive-wing organizers and oath administrators. Colonial officers directed countless screening parades in which lines of Mau Mau suspects filed past the hooded loyalists. His identity protected, the loyalist could send a man or woman off to a screening centre or a detention camp with a nod of the head.

The screening involved beating of the Mau Mau rebels and their sympathizers. Joseph Mwangi Mbaya noted: Each Kikuyu male resident was supposed to carry around five documents: an employment registration card, a card setting out his history of employment; an identity card; a poll tax receipt and a Kikuyu special tax receipt. Failure to produce these documents was enough grounds for suspicion of being Mau Mau. If one did not have any of the above documents, he/she would be termed Mau Mau or a Mau Mau sympathizer and eventually ended up in detention camps for more grilling. The home guards and the colonial security forces also detained anybody whom they suspected of being a Mau Mau supporter. To identify the more important suspects, the screening teams were assisted by *gakunia*-colonial loyalists who put on a sack, which was hooded. They could stand next to the colonial screeners looking at the groups of suspected Mau Mau who would be escorted past them [46].

The detention orders prohibited the Africans from being outdoors between 6:00 pm and 8:00 am the following day. If one were caught out, they would be suspected of being Mau Mau supporters and sent to detention camps, the villages or even killed. The Emergency Power Ordinance also legalized the construction of villages and work camps that contain the Kikuyu, Embu or Meru in one place [47]. If any villager wanted to leave these villages, one had to notify his/her chief and the colonial officers but preferably their employers of their movements.

The regulations were intended to limit the freedom of movements. It spelt out that: No Kikuyu Embu and Meru would enter, leave or attempt to leave any District within the Central Province under the jurisdiction of township or municipality within the mentioned province. No one would enter or leave any location areas within Central Province without the permit so to do. In addition, no Kikuyu, Embu or Meru would travel within the Central Province by any means, other than on foot without a permit to do so. No

Kikuyu, Embu or Meru employed upon a farm or in a forest areas within Central Province, would leave the area without the permit of the relevant authorities. The regulation was discriminatory in that the members of the Kenya police and the tribal police of her majesty were not applicable to them. If one went against the regulation, he/she would land in detention camps [48].

VILLIGIZATION: POLICY OF CONFINEMENT

In June 1954, the colonial government embarked on compulsory construction of villages in order to contain the Mau Mau. The Kikuyu were herded into these villages at strategic points. Villages held those residing as squatters on European farms and town dwellers. Those from towns were first held in barbed enclosures –*Ciugu*. These encircled barbed enclosures held all people that were deemed illegally residents in the city and other areas. They were used for screening and profiling of Mau Mau. Those identified as Mau Mau were subsequently sent to detention camps. Women, children and the innocent were repatriated to the villages.

During the screening process, the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru were required to produce five separate documents: employment registration cards, a card stating his history of employment, an identity card, poll tax receipts and Kikuyu special tax receipts. If one failed to produce these documents, he/she would be held as a Mau Mau suspect. He/she would be detained for either being a Mau Mau or a supporter. *Gakunia* assisted the screening team identify the Mau Mau. They sieved through the hundreds of Africans waiting behind the wire separating the offending communities [49]. The Kikuyu, Embu or Meru resident within Nairobi were interrogated and properly classified from Langata camp. The Mau Mau would be transferred to more permanent detention camps at Manyani and Makinnon road. A crude profiling system was set up to categorize suspects. It depended on the suspect's degree of commitment to the Mau Mau course [50].

Members of the three ethnic communities were also removed from their residence and taken to newly created security villages- synonymous with concentration camps or detention. The process of detention was known as pipeline. It was a process of screening from arrest all the way to the detention camps and did not have to be clogged. The process drained into Manyani or maximum security institutions. They were taken into centralized, regulated villages, which were situated at key points along the main roads. This villagization bore "a striking resemblance", to the British campaigns in South Africa during the Anglo Boer War. The latter were used to control Afrikaner women and children. They were an immediate model from colonial Malaya where the British had first employed such tactics [51]. Villagization was used as a

mechanism of defeating Mau Mau. Villages helped to sever supply lines to the Mau Mau laden forests. The villages surrounded by barbed wire and spiked trenches. They were heavily guarded by armed home guards perched on watchtowers, characterised by sirens and daily forced labour.

The colonialists wanted to maintain full control of the population and isolate the Mau Mau. It was also intended to keep the support of those loyal to the colonial government. Villagization was therefore a punitive strategy to control and fully defeat the Mau Mau. Villagization was the worst result of the State of Emergency. Old men would be forced to fetch wood in the forests and women would fetch grass to thatch the houses. Women would be forced to work with their children behind their backs. After the huts were ready several women and their children, [52] would occupy them. As Esther Muthoni Mungai recounted:

Old men and women were ordered to move from their homes. Everything was burnt, cattle were confiscated and people were ordered to go into forest to get logs and reeds to construct houses. Women, children and elderly men constructed the villages. Even me, with my two day old baby had to carry thatching reeds. The construction involved everybody. There was no discrimination in the work. Ten or more together with their families occupied one hut. All the houses were constructed in the same circular style, with conical roofs [53].

The architectural design of the security villages depicts an element of colonial humiliation control and domination. Leah Nyaruai gives her experience in one such village:

The local people i.e. the Kikuyu constructed the villages. The state of emergency was for women, period of total destruction. The colonial government ordered our homes to be destroyed and we be detained with our children in the barbed – wire villages. We were forced to labour under deplorable conditions. In these newly built villages, there was torture, exhaustion, diseases and starvation that claimed many lives [54].

Villages were constructed in the valley while the home guards houses were on the upper side of the hill. It was to facilitate monitoring of the villages. Isolation from the forest was made complete by the construction of trenches along the village boundaries. Villages were constructed through forced communal labour of the women and men while home guards kept watch at the watchtowers. Spiked sticks lined the bottom of the trenches making it difficult for the rebels

to cross from the forest. The objective of villages was to ensure that the Mau Mau were completely isolated from the rest of the people. The isolation was achieved through the architectural design of the villages and continuous supervision by the home guards and the colonial police. Entrance to the village was through a single gate controlled by home guards and colonial police surveillance.

Women and children were accompanied by home guards and other colonial officials to the farms to fetch food and then herded back into the villages. They would not take long since they were expected to return to the villages in time. The work in the farms would be done at breakneck speed. Loyalists and their families lived in luxurious houses with ample space and enough food. They had permission to own the confiscated livestock from the Mau Mau fighters and their sympathizers. They too would enjoy the labour of the “imprisoned” villagers. Women suspected to be Mau Mau or their sympathizers would be forced to work in the houses of loyalists’ women. They would draw water, fetch firewood, tend farms and even herd the loyalists’ livestock. The loyalist women were not required to work on the forced communal projects or even on the basic domestic upkeep of their home.

This distinction between loyalists and their families and the confined villages created a stratum in the Kikuyu socio-political life. Ruth Mwhiki noted:

The day begun at dawn with the sound of a whistle from the home guards watch tower. I remember my neighbour Wangeci wa Mburu who was late in waking up. The homeguard came and brought down the door with a kick. She was preparing porridge for her children. The home guard kicked down the pot. She was beaten ruthlessly despite her pregnancy. She was battered and forced to join us at the edge of Mount Kenya forest for trench digging. The work continued the whole day without a pause. The colonial officers supervised the work from their land rovers. They shouted: “work!” “work!”. The homeguards had to impress their white supervisors with vigour [55].

People were picked from the streets or their homes when security forces brought down their doors with boot kicks and rifle butts. The victims of the exercise were taken into wired enclosures, *ciugu*. Employment cards were used to identify tribal affiliations with Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities being herded together for intensive screening. Members of other ethnic groups were released and returned to their homes. The barbed-wire enclosures were also established in the Rift valley to profile the offending

communities. If one was found to be a Mau Mau he was put into pipeline for Manyani detention camp. Isaac Mwaura Kinyanjui an employee in Nairobi was one of the victims of the operation. He recalled the encounter:

*I had no time to pack my belongings when I was arrested at Pumwani in Nairobi. We were hurriedly forced into a lorry and taken to the Langata Camp. We were about two hundred in that vehicle. The place was encircled with barbed wire; there were people who had arrived before us. We found them being beaten by the colonial police and the home guards. Some were nursing their wounds; I remember one woman was beaten to death. When I saw that, I knew that the devil and his agents had arrived. Trouble was looming. The oath we had taken gave us a reason to be silent. We remained focused to our objective of fighting the mzungu. After a while, we were lined up and ordered by the home guards to raise our heads as *gakunia* (informants) identified the Mau Mau [56].*

Gakunia put on a sack with perforated eyes so that the Mau Mau fighters would not identify them. This home guard sealed a person's destiny within a second. There were many colonial security officers. Everyone was made to pass by the *gakunia* in a single file. The *gakunia* stared at you keenly his nodding being enough proof of one being a gang or a *Mau Mau* sympathizer. The interrogation exercise was brutal and humiliating. The victims of the screening had their testicles squeezed using a pair of pliers, beaten with clubs to denounce the oath they were alleged to have taken. As this was happening in Nairobi, other parts of the country experienced similar campaigns of relocation [57]. In the Rift Valley Province, employees from the suspect communities employed in settler farms underwent similar experiences.

The barbed enclosures were screening centres. If the screening teams was dissatisfied with a suspect's answers, it was accepted that torture was a legitimate next resort, electric shock was widely used, as well as cigarettes and bottles (often broken), gun barrels, knives, snakes, vermin, and hot eggs were thrust up men's rectums and women vaginas. The screening teams whipped, shot, burned and mutilated Mau Mau suspects, ostensibly to gather intelligence for military operatives and as court evidence.

As the Emergency Orders were being implemented, the Governor's directives were frustrated by the intensive Mau Mau activities in Mount Kenya and Aberdare forests. The Mau Mau were determined to fight the British to the bitter end. They turned against the loyalists and all those who denounced the oath who

they viewed as traitors. Collaborators faced the wrath of the fighters. One such example was the infamous Lari Massacre in Limuru where the Mau Mau killed men women and children. The Lari attack may have seemed an indiscriminate slaughter of collaborators and their families but its victims were well selected. All the victims were families of local chiefs, ex-chiefs, headmen, councilors and a prominent home guard. The male heads of these households were leading members of the Lari's loyalist community [58].

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