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List of Abbreviations

CBD	Central Business District
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EACC	Ethics And Anti-Corruption Commission
GEN Z	Generation Z
GSU	General Service Unit
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IG	Instagram
IPOA	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
KE	Kenya
KNCHR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
QR code	Quick Response Code
RRU	Rapid Response Unit
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
UDA	United Democratic Alliance
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollar
VAT	Value Added Tax

FOREWORD



The year 2024 will be remembered as the moment Kenya's youth - bold, digital and defiant - rose to reclaim their nation. What began as outrage over punitive taxation transformed into a powerful people's movement that reawakened the spirit of democracy not just in Kenya and Africa but the whole world.

The Gen Z protests were not organized in political boardrooms but in online spaces, powered by hashtags, live streams and unbreakable unity. Not only did they shout out their frustration over corruption, unemployment and injustice but more importantly, they carried a vision of a better Kenya built on fairness, integrity and hope.

From Nairobi to Kisumu, Mombasa to Eldoret, young Kenyans stood unarmed yet fearless. They faced bullets, arrests and intimidation yet refused to surrender. Their courage inspired a nation and reminded us that true leadership comes from conviction, not position. The youth showed the nation that the price of freedom was steep. Lives like those of Rex Masai, Denzel Washington, David Shieni, Eric Kasyoka, and Kennedy Onyango were lost. Their blood watered the seeds of a new Kenya and their names must never be forgotten.

This report, "Blood and Blossom: The 2024 Gen Z Protests in Kenya", documents this defining moment. It records both the brutality endured and the beauty of collective resistance. It honors those who stood, fell and rose again for justice. It is a story of pain and promise, of a generation that redefined activism through courage, creativity and conviction.

Kenya's youth proved that democracy is not a gift from the powerful but a right claimed by the people. Their defiance restored our faith in the power of unity and truth. As we remember the blood, may we nurture the blossom - a Kenya that truly belongs to all.

Hussein Khalid,
Executive Director.

Chapter 1

Introduction to VOCAL Africa and Its Work on Rapid Response to Human Rights Violations.

1.1 About VOCAL Africa

VOCAL Africa is a bold, pan African human rights movement founded to amplify the voices of ordinary people in the face of injustice. From its inception, VOCAL Africa has stood as a nonpartisan, citizen centered organization, collectively driven by community activists and leaders with the conviction that dignity, justice and democracy are not privileges but rights. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya and working across the East African region, VOCAL Africa has become synonymous with fearless advocacy, rapid response activism and strategic litigation

that centers the lived experiences of those most impacted by state violence and structural oppression.

Our work is deeply grounded in the belief that all people, regardless of age, background or political belief, deserve the freedom to speak truth to power without fear of reprisal. As the state increasingly deploys coercive force against its own people, VOCAL Africa operates at the intersection of grassroots organizing, legal advocacy, emergency response and policy reforms.

1.2 Core Mission and Objectives

VOCAL Africa's mission is simple but powerful. It is to protect and promote human rights by defending the defenseless, empowering the powerless and holding duty bearers accountable through bold, unapologetic activism. We exist to serve:

- Victims of police brutality and arbitrary detention.
- Human rights defenders under attack.
- Youth organizers and social movements under threat.
- Communities silenced by state censorship and disinformation.
- Families mourning extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Our key objectives include:

- Documenting and publicizing human rights violations in real time.
- Providing rapid legal, medical and psychological support to victims.
- Coordinating emergency response teams to secure the release of detainees.
- Strengthening grassroots capacity for organizing, digital security and civic education.
- Litigating landmark cases to push systemic reforms.
- Mobilizing domestic and international solidarity for the defense of civic space.

1.3 The Rapid Response Unit

At the heart of VOCAL Africa's impact is our Rapid Response Unit (RRU) which is a highly coordinated team of lawyers, medics, social workers, communication experts and community mobilizers deployed whenever the state launches violent crackdowns on peaceful dissent.

The RRU was formalized in 2024 during the heightened wave of civic unrest in Kenya and Nigeria and has since been instrumental

in documenting abuses, following up on extra judicial killings, rescuing abducted protestors and countering state narratives with verified facts. The team operates on a 24/7 call out model, with designated response hubs in Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Lagos, Abuja, Kampala, and Dar es Salaam.

In the context of the 2024 GenZ Protests in Kenya, the RRU was deployed to the field between June and September 2024,

responding to:

- Extra judicial killings in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and the environs of these cities.
- Arbitrary arrests and detentions at Muthaiga, Kamukunji, Industrial Area, Pangani, Central Police, Kondele and Bamburi
- Abduction cases in informal settlements such as Mathare, Kayole, Kibra and Likoni.
- Hospital emergencies, including aiding victims of gunshot wounds, tear gas asphyxiation and blunt force trauma.
- Families seeking legal aid to trace missing loved ones

1.4 Digital and Legal Infrastructure

VOCAL Africa combines boots on the ground mobilization with a robust digital infrastructure designed to track, document and publicize state abuses. Through secure, encrypted platforms, we maintain a human rights incident tracker used by partners and verified sources to log in disappearances, injuries and deaths.

Meanwhile, our legal defence team comprises of a network of pro-bono lawyers across Kenya and Africa that supports detained protestors, challenges illegal detentions and files public interest litigation in courts.

1.5 Partnerships and Movement Building

VOCAL Africa is part of a broader movement. Our work in 2024 was done in coordination with:

- Other human rights organizations like HAKI Africa, KNCHR and Amnesty International.
- Legal bodies including ICJ Kenya, Katiba Institute and the Law Society of Kenya.
- State oversight authorities including IPOA, EACC and the Ombudsman.
- Local, national and international media houses including Eastleigh Voice, Standard Group and Al Jazeera.
- International actors such as Human Rights Watch, Front Line Defenders and Freedom House
- Grassroots youth groups, university student bodies and digital justice collectives

This ecosystem of partnership for justice is what enabled VOCAL Africa to remain resilient and effective, even as states sought to stifle our work through harassment, deportation, cyberattacks and arrests.

1.6 Our Commitment to Truth, Justice and Memory

At VOCAL Africa, we believe that vocalizing and documenting is part of ensuring justice. The 2024 GenZ Protests marked a turning point in Kenya's democratic journey. Our commitment is to document these moments of courage and pain with integrity and care, so that the victims are not forgotten, the perpetrators are not forgiven and the people are never silenced again.

the disappeared. We fight for the living and above all, we believe that freedom must be defended in every generation.

We walk hand in hand with the youth who stood up for Kenya. We mourn the dead. We defend the detained. We remember

Chapter 2

Background of the 2024 GenZ Protests: From Rejecting the Finance Bill to Demanding a New Kenya

2.1 Kenya in 2024: A Country on the Brink



By early 2024, Kenya stood at a political and economic crossroads. Nearly two years into President William Ruto's first term, the promised "bottom-up economic model" was beginning to collapse under its own contradictions. While the government portrayed itself as pro poor and reformist, ordinary citizens were experiencing the opposite - a ballooning public debt burden, rising cost of living, unsustainable tax

obligations and growing reports of state corruption, mismanagement and opulence.

Youth unemployment remained stubbornly high, affecting over 67% of those aged 18–34. University graduates, diploma holders and even skilled laborers found themselves either underpaid or jobless. In the informal settlements of Mathare, Kibra, and Mukuru, the frustrations were palpable. Meanwhile, middle class families were struggling with increased school fees, medical costs, and rent. Many felt as though the government was pushing them over the edge while elites dined on privilege.

At the same time, the civic space was shrinking. Human rights defenders were facing harassment, journalists were being surveilled and peaceful dissent was increasingly criminalized. The use of state violence, especially by elite units of the National Police Service, was growing bolder. Yet, despite this heavy climate, there were murmurs of resistance, mostly online.

2.2 The Finance Bill 2024: A Catalyst for Rebellion



On June 13th, 2024, the Ruto administration tabled the Finance Bill 2024, which became the flashpoint for what would evolve into

one of the most significant mass uprisings in Kenya's post independence history. The Bill sought to increase government revenue

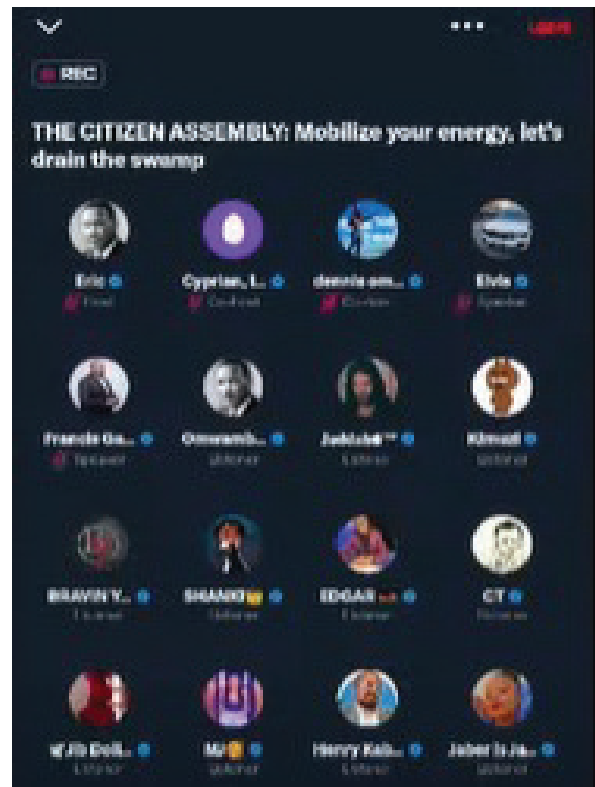
through a series of regressive tax measures that disproportionately affected the working class and youth. Among the most controversial proposals were:

- **16% VAT** on bread, a staple food for most Kenyan households.
- Motor vehicle circulation tax - **2.5%** of the value of a car annually.
- Eco levy on essential goods including sanitary pads, diapers, phones and electronics.
- Digital content monetization tax, directly affecting youth creatives and influencers.
- Increment of Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax bands.
- Continuation and expansion of the housing levy, which had already been ruled unconstitutional by the courts.

These tax proposals ignited widespread outrage, especially among GenZ and Millennials, who saw the Bill as both an economic attack and a symbolic betrayal. It was not just about bread and cars. It was about dignity, equity and fairness. For many, it felt like the government was punishing the youth for being poor.



Kenya's Parliament, increasingly viewed as a rubber stamp institution, was expected to pass the Bill despite the uproar. This perceived disregard for public opinion triggered an organic, decentralized mobilization. #RejectFinanceBill2024 started trending within hours. Then came #OccupyParliament, #RutoMustGo, and #GenZRevolution.



What followed was not orchestrated by unions, political parties or NGOs. It was led by ordinary youth and digital natives. It was on TikTok, Twitter (X), Instagram and Telegram. They demystified tax clauses using memes. They built mass graphics explaining how the Bill would devastate the economy. They went live to expose luxury government spending, detailing how Parliament spent over Sh100 million on tea annually while taxing sanitary pads and crucially, they called for street action.

Week of horror for MPs as numbers leaked, phones bombarded with calls and texts

Saturday, June 22, 2024



The chairperson National Assembly Finance and Planning Committee Francis Kimani Karia during a session at Bunge Towers Nairobi on Thursday, May 23, 2024. File | Nation Media Group



By Mercy Simiyu & Daniel Ogetto

<https://nation.africa/kenya/news/week-of-horror-for-mps-as-numbers-leaked--4665840>

2.3 A Generation Awakens: June 18 and the Power of Spontaneity

On Tuesday, June 18th, 2024, thousands of Kenyans poured into the streets of Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Eldoret, Nakuru and Nyeri to protest against the Finance Bill. The epicenter was Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD), where protestors gathered outside Parliament, the National Treasury and along Kenyatta Avenue. It was a weekday, and yet young people left their jobs, universities and businesses to show up. Dressed in black and waving placards, they sang, chanted and demanded that the Bill be withdrawn.



This was not a protest of seasoned activists. It was a protest of students, boda boda riders, graphic designers, medics, TikTok content creators, musicians and mothers. Many were first time protestors. Some were even apolitical before this moment. Yet their frustration had reached a boiling point. What made this protest powerful was its organic, leaderless and decentralized structure. No one was paid. No one gave transport money. No political party was invited. No central coordination committee existed. Everyone simply showed up.

In WhatsApp groups and Twitter threads, protestors discussed strategy, shared tips on evading police, offered digital security training and provided emotional support. When tear gas was fired, someone posted an impromptu guide to protestors to "use water mixed with baking soda. Don't rub your eyes." It was a masterclass in decentralized civic resistance, a protest without generals and yet, one with precise execution.

How to protect yourself against tear gas 101. Share thread widely

When a tear gas canister explodes, CS powder sprays into the air and adheres to any moisture it can find, including the tears in your eyes, the sweat on your skin, and saliva and mucus in your mouth.

17:39 · 6/19/24 · 38K Views

8 788 993 152

Relevant ▾

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Omega K @kenn_kamau · 6/19/24

A little bit of water will only increase the irritation all over your face. CS particles are insoluble. You need a serious amount of water, to fully wash those particles away. Seek high ground, as the closer you are to the ground, the higher the concentration of gas.

2 50 116 6.1K



Omega K @kenn_kamau · 6/19/24

Hong Kong protesters carry around spray bottles with a baking soda and water solution (three teaspoons of powder for every 250 ml of liquid), which they spray in their face and mouth to neutralize the effects of tear gas particles. If you wear contacts, remove them.

2 222 324 10K

https://x.com/kenn_kamau/status/1803437546283639110?s=46

2.4 The State's First Response: Brutality

The government was unprepared. Its initial reaction was confusion, followed quickly by repression. On June 18, police officers used tear gas, water cannons and live rounds to disperse peaceful crowds. Images of bleeding youth, unconscious protestors and injured medics began circulating online. Yet rather than discourage the movement, this amplified public outrage.



The following days saw hundreds more turn up. In Nairobi, youth occupied Parliament Road and staged sit ins. In Mombasa, they blocked sections of Moi Avenue. In Kisumu, they marched to the county commissioner's office. Parents began joining in. Civil servants, dressed in plain clothes, walked alongside university students. The government's insistence that "protests are sponsored by opposition forces" fell flat.

Instead of responding with dialogue, the state escalated force. Enforced disappearances began. Arrests were intensified. Protestors were abducted in unmarked vehicles at night. Others were tracked through their mobile phones. Tech developers who built protest coordination apps like "Occupy KE" were arrested. Young Kenyans were sought after by detectives, others were profiled, threatened and charged with vague crimes including "cyber misuse."

2.5 Beyond the Bill: Expanding the Demands

By early July, the protests had moved far beyond the Finance Bill. The youth were now demanding:

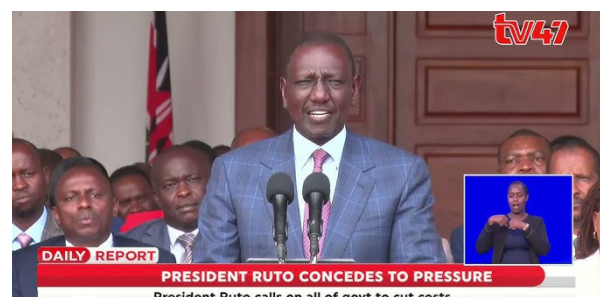
- The immediate resignation of President Ruto, Deputy President Gachagua and all corrupt ministers
- The arrest and prosecution of police officers involved in extrajudicial killings



- A forensic audit of public debt and parastatal corruption
- The abolition of the unconstitutional housing levy

- A forensic audit of public debt and parastatal corruption
- The protection of civic space and digital freedoms
- A national conversation on constitutional reforms, youth inclusion and economic justice

This transformation marked a seismic shift in Kenya's civic landscape. For the first time since independence, a non partisan, youth led uprising had forced a sitting president to blink. On July 3rd, 2024 President Ruto addressed the nation and announced the withdrawal of the Finance Bill. But the youth didn't stop. For them, the Bill was just the symptom. The real disease was the system.



2.3 A Generation Awakens: June 18 and the Power of Spontaneity

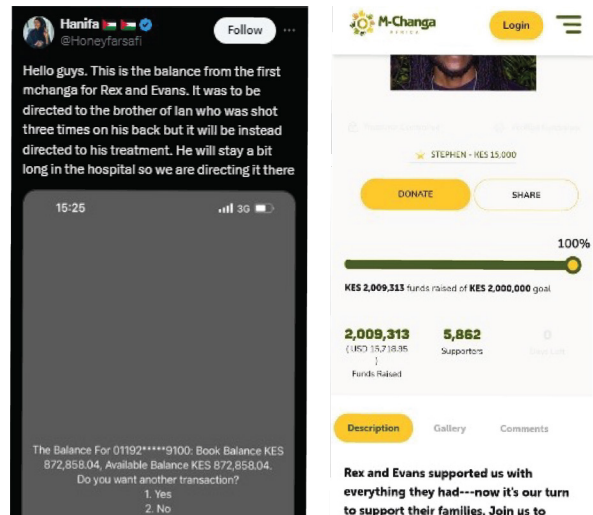
The GenZ protests of 2024 brought about an unprecedented civic unity. The youth tore down the walls of tribe, class and religion. For once, a Kikuyu in Kiambu marched beside a Luo in Kisumu, a Somali in Eastleigh and a Kamba in Machakos. No tribal kingpin spoke for them. No political party hijacked their cause. They rejected tribalism, personality cults and transactional politics.

They didn't need politicians. They had each other and they were tribeless, leaderless, partyless.

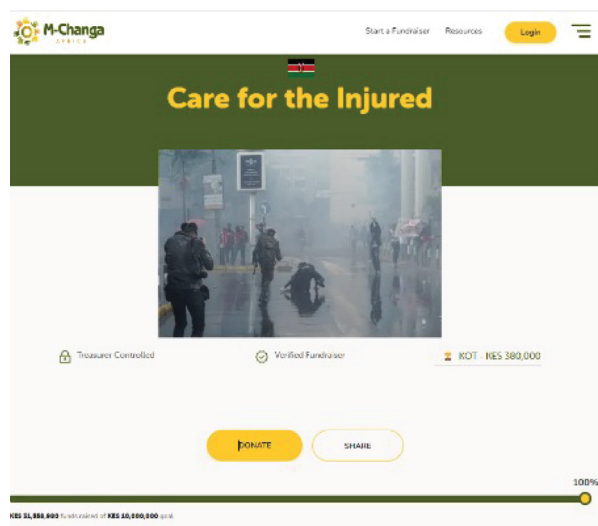
They launched their own fundraising via M-Changa, raised money for legal bail outs, medical bills and burial expenses. They formed rescue teams, verified disappearances and created "missing persons" databases. They occupied Parliament. They launched #OccupyStateHouse, #Tumechoka, and #FreedomIsComingKE.



Screenshot of the M-Changa link used



Screenshot of the first Hanifa transaction balance, and live donation updates.



Screenshot of Hanifa's initiative to care for the injured-on 22 July 2024.

In their minds, this was not just a protest, it was a revolution in values. A rejection of fear. A declaration of dignity. A rebirth of citizen power.

Chapter 3

The Protests: An Unscripted, Unbought and Unstoppable People's Uprising

3.1 Introduction: The Rebellion of a Generation

The 2024 GenZ Protests in Kenya were not just about resisting a Finance Bill. They were the explosive rupture of years of economic injustice, state repression and youth marginalization. For far too long, young people had watched from the sidelines - underemployed, overtaxed, brutalized and mocked by a political elite that viewed them

as naive and disengaged.

But in June 2024, the youth shattered that illusion.

What began as spontaneous opposition to punitive taxes evolved into a sustained national resistance - leaderless yet organized,

angry yet peaceful, digital yet physical. It was a movement without a blueprint, bound not by ideology or tribe but by shared pain and common purpose. Protestors came not for money or political gain but for the love of country and the dream of a different Kenya.

This chapter provides a detailed chronicle of

3.2 The Genesis of Mobilization: No Leaders, Only Purpose

The most remarkable feature of the 2024 GenZ protests was the complete absence of traditional leadership. There were no party chiefs, union secretaries or civil society directors issuing statements or marching in front. There was no headquarters. No NGO branding. No budgeted workshops. There were only people - young, fearless and angry - coordinating from living rooms, dormitories, matatus and mobile phones.

How they Organized:

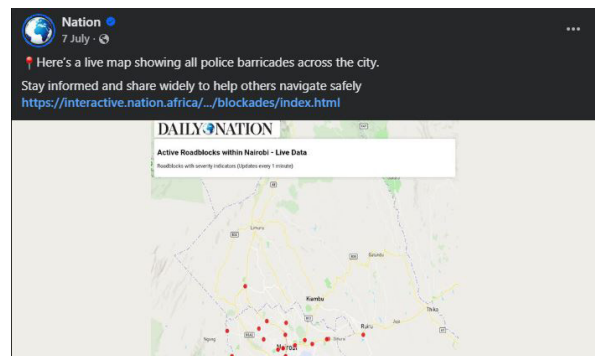
- Telegram groups named "OccupyKE" and "GenZ4Justice" where logistics were crowdsourced live.
- TikTok and Instagram reels giving step by step protest guides: what to wear, what to carry, how to deescalate.
- Digital fliers created by volunteer designers, posted hourly with new rallying points.



Screenshot of some of the digital fliers shared during the GenZ protests 2024.

the protests. From their raw beginnings to their poetic heights, from the street chants to the tear gas clouds, from the digital trenches to the graves of martyrs. It documents how a movement of the young became the conscience of a nation.

- Live maps showing road closures and police lines, updated in real time by boda boda riders and citizen journalists.



Screenshot of the live maps showing road closures and police roadblocks.

- Protest protocols on how to deal with tear gas, detainment, or abduction - circulated via encrypted Signal groups.

The command center was everywhere, the leadership was everyone and the motivation was clear: We are not protesting just to survive, we are protesting to live with dignity.



3.3 The Pulse of the Uprising: Key Phases and Turning Points

June 18: The First Wave

This was the day everything changed.

Hundreds of youth converged on Nairobi's Parliament Road with handwritten placards, black T-shirts and national flags. Some carried copies of the Constitution. Others wore face masks soaked in vinegar. There were no chants for politicians. Only defiant calls like:

"We are not the generation you
can silence!"

"Taxation without representation
is tyranny!"

"You will not eat our future!"

"We are not our parents, We will
f**k you up"

Police fired tear gas almost immediately. But instead of dispersing, protestors sat down in the streets. They raised their hands. Some began singing the National Anthem. That image where young Kenyans being tear-gassed while singing words of the national anthem "Justice be our shield and defender", became the symbol of the movement.

June 20 - 22: The Flame Spreads Nationally

By the end of that week, the protest movement had lit a fire across the country.

- In Mombasa, youth marched across the Likoni Ferry with placards and traditional drums.
- Providing rapid legal, medical and psychological support to victims.
- In Kisumu, students from Maseno University joined market vendors and boda boda riders in parading along Oginga Odinga Street.
- In Eldoret, protestors blocked roads and demanded to speak to their MPs.
- In Nakuru, artists and poets staged a "public resistance gallery," painting the faces of fallen comrades on the walls of Nyayo Gardens.

Everywhere, protestors rejected violence but they also rejected silence. They saw themselves not as rebels, but as guardians of the republic.

3.4 The Days the Streets Spoke Louder than Parliament

June 25: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power

Every state crackdown bred more resistance. On June 25th, 2024 a powerful protest was held dubbed "Occupy Parliament" in Nairobi to seek the Members of Parliament in their place of work and to demand they do not vote for the Finance Bill. Hundreds of thousands of youthful protestors filled the streets. They carried flags, water bottles and their phones. They marched together, for their country, demanding change and calling out their MPs who had abandoned them. They moved together and breached parliament. They went inside but found no MPs – instead of meeting the people and listening to them, the leaders had fled.



Tens of thousands marched towards Parliament. Chanting "We are the government!" They were determined to not let their voices be drowned. Live videos showed MPs escorted by GSU commandos, fleeing as protestors banged on their vehicles and read out their names aloud. Several MPs were forced to retreat to basements, surrounded by peaceful citizens demanding accountability.

It was a moment of democratic reversal - where the rulers became the ruled, and the streets became the seat of power.

In its usual response, the state security apparatus responded to the march to parliament with brute force. The police, the army and other officers, opened fire at the protestors. At least 9 people were killed in and around parliament on June 25th and many more injured and disappeared. What the people thought would be a meeting of the people and their leaders, ended up to be bloodshed and death. Eric Kasyoka, ????,

????, ?????, all lost their lives on that day.

The next day on June 26th, VOCAL Africa reported that bodies were lying on the floor of the city mortuary, having been brought in by police. According to the mortuary records, the bodies were picked in and around parliament. All of them bore bullet wounds. Family members trooped to the mortuary, wailing and crying. Activists met the families and in the spirit of patriotism, comforted the families by assuring them that their dead kin were martyrs of Kenya, heroes to be remembered, nationalists to be celebrated.

3.5 Innovation in Action: Tools of a 21st Century Protest



This was not a protest of stones and tires. It was a protest of technology, poetry, data and strategy. Youth turned every tool they had into a weapon of resistance.

Digital Tools

- TikTok tutorials with legal aid tips, viewed by over 5 million people in 72 hours.
- Crowdfunding platforms that raised over Kenya Shillings 30 million (USD 240,000) within weeks.
- Missing persons' databases with real time updates on abductions and releases.
- Hashtag storms coordinated to trend globally, reaching newsrooms from Berlin to New York.
- Interactive protest posters with QR codes linking to MP contact details and constituency report cards.

Cultural Resistance:

- Artists composed protest songs like "Hatutishiki" and "This Tax Is Theft", which went viral on Spotify and SoundCloud.
- Poets performed spoken word at street corners.
- Gospel choirs joined the protests with rewritten hymns.
- Murals of martyrs covered the walls of Gikambura, Mathare, Majengo, and Kisumu Ndogo.

This was a cultural revolution as much as it was political. Young people reclaiming the narrative through art, language and rhythm.

3.6 Mutual Aid and Deep Solidarity: People Protecting People

This movement redefined what it means to show up for one another. Without external aid or formal structures, GenZ and their allies built a parallel system of care to protect the protest community.

Street Medics and Safe Houses:

- Volunteers roamed protests with first aid kits and sanitiser sprays.
- Some doctors offered free treatment to protest victims.
- Safe houses were opened for those in danger and at risk.
- Emergency rescue networks coordinated car pickups.

Legal Defenders:

- Young lawyers from the Law Society of Kenya activated 24/7 helplines.
- Habeas corpus petitions were filed overnight.
- Volunteer legal observers documented every arrest and injury.
- Youth paralegals trained each other in arrest procedures and police station protocol.
- VOCAL Africa and other CSOs supported families of victims of extra judicial killings.

VOCAL Africa and other CSOs supported families of victims of extra judicial killings.

3.7 Confronting Brutality with Bravery



Despite the peaceful nature of the protests, the state unleashed unprecedented violence:

- Over 63 confirmed deaths, many shot in the chest or back.
- Dozens of enforced disappearances, including minors.
- Mass arbitrary arrests, often in unmarked cars at night.
- Widespread torture, including beatings and denial of medical treatment.

- Targeting of women protestors with threats of sexual violence.
- Digital surveillance, phishing attacks and internet throttling.

Yet, not once did the youth retaliate with violence. They filmed, they reported, they mourned and then they marched again.

Their message was simple:

"We will not be the children of fear. We are the ancestors of freedom."

3.8 The Moment Kenya Changed Forever

When President Ruto withdrew the Finance Bill on July 3, 2024, it was not the end of the movement. It was its confirmation. The youth had forced a sitting president to back down through decentralized, peaceful, unrelenting pressure. This was not just a policy reversal, it was a democratic reckoning.

The protests changed how Kenya sees itself. The youth shattered the myth that youth are apathetic. They proved that power does not reside in Parliament. It lives in the people. They redefined leadership, showing that courage, not title, makes one a leader.

3.9 The Spirit Lives On

Even after the tear gas faded and the tents folded, the spirit of the protests endured. New youth coalitions were formed. Community schools for civic education sprang up. Art exhibitions honoring the martyrs toured the country. Legal campaigns to hold killers accountable began. The protests may have ended, but the movement lived on in every young Kenyan who now believed in their voice.



Chapter 4

The Gross Human Rights Violations: A Generation Crushed Under the Weight of a Violent State

4.1 Introduction: The Price of Dissent

Peaceful protests are a constitutional right in Kenya. Article 37 of the Constitution guarantees every person the right to assemble, demonstrate, picket and present petitions to public authorities. But during the 2024 GenZ Protests, the Kenyan government treated protestors not as citizens exercising their rights but as enemies of the state.

What unfolded on the streets of Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Mombasa and across the country was not law enforcement. It was state sanctioned violence. Armed police deployed with orders to suppress, not protect. Protestors were tear gassed, beaten,

shot, abducted and tortured. Many never came back.

This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the systematic and widespread human rights violations committed by Kenyan state agencies during the 2024 protests. It draws from verified testimonies, postmortem reports, legal documents, media investigations and field monitoring by VOCAL Africa and its partners. The chapter also documents how these violations were part of a broader strategy to criminalize dissent, silence youth voices and preserve a decaying status quo through fear.

4.2 Killings in Cold Blood: The Deadly Face of Repression



As of September 2024, at least 63 protestors had been confirmed dead, most of them young men and women between the ages of 15 and 29. These were not accidental deaths. They were deliberate executions carried out by security officers using live ammunition against unarmed civilians.

In many cases, police did not just fire to disperse. They fired to kill. Autopsies showed chest, head and back wounds. Some had multiple bullet entries. None were armed.

Many of the killings occurred during protests, after dusk or during night raids showing a pattern of extrajudicial executions aimed at eliminating protestors and discouraging turnout.

4.3 Enforced Disappearances: Where Are They?



One of the darkest aspects of the 2024 protests was the resurgence of enforced disappearances, a tactic Kenya's security services have long used in counterterrorism operations in the North East and coastal regions.

Between June and August 2024, over 100 youth were reported missing, abducted by

plainclothes men in unmarked cars, often at night. Many were picked up from their homes, workplaces or while leaving protests.

Patterns:

- Victims were often GenZ livestreamers, content creators or vocal organizers.
- Phones were confiscated, social media accounts deleted and in some cases, their TikTok content erased.
- Families were given no information on their whereabouts for days or weeks.
- Some were dumped in dams, forests or rivers after being tortured.
- Others have never been found.



Survivor Testimony:

"They tied my hands and feet, hung me upside down and beat the soles of my feet with metal rods. They asked why I was telling people to come to the protest. I kept telling them I was just filming. They said, 'If you like TikTok so much, go record this.' Then they electrocuted me."

— Anonymous survivor, Nairobi, July 2024

The abductions were not random. They were surgical attacks on voices of resistance. In many cases, police refused to confirm or deny detentions. Courts were defied. Habeas corpus orders were ignored. The Ministry of Interior claimed ignorance.

The goal was terror. But the movement continued.

4.4 Arbitrary Arrests, Torture and Abuse in Detention



Hundreds of youth were arrested across the country between June and August 2024. Some were held for days without charge. Others were denied legal representation. A disturbing number were physically and

psychologically tortured while in custody.

Common Violations

- Beatings with batons, cables or gun butts
- Stripping and humiliation, especially of female protestors
- Denial of food and medical care
- Forced confessions and fabricated charges (e.g., "unlawful assembly," "incitement to violence")
- Death threats and threats of sexual assault

4.5 Silencing the Witnesses: Media and Digital Suppression

To control the narrative, the state launched an aggressive campaign of information warfare and censorship.

Tactics Used

- Throttling of internet access in protest zones.
- Arrest of journalists and photographers, including international media.
- Cyber attacks on protester livestreams and accounts.
- Use of bots and troll farms to spread disinformation (e.g., "protests are foreign funded").
- Harassment of outspoken influencers, including doxing and online threats.
- Blocking or banning of protest hashtags on X (Twitter), Facebook and TikTok.

Several media houses were warned against covering protests "sympathetically." Others were fed false police statements claiming protestors were armed or violent, despite overwhelming video evidence to the contrary.



Digital creators faced takedown requests, shadow bans and surveillance. Some received anonymous calls demanding they "tone it down."

It was a war on truth. Yet, the truth still reached the people.

4.6 State Denial and Culture of Impunity

Despite mounting evidence of widespread abuses, the government refused to acknowledge wrongdoing. The President, Cabinet Secretaries and National Police Service:

- Denied use of excessive force
- Claimed "rogue elements" were responsible
- Blamed "foreign actors" and "opposition incitement"
- Justified abductions as "security operations"
- Repeatedly referred to protestors as "hooligans", "treasonous", or "criminal elements"



Meanwhile, not a single police officer or government official has been held accountable for the killings, torture or disappearances. In fact, some commanders were promoted.

Commissions of inquiry were promised but none were formed. Investigations were announced, but no findings were released. This pattern is not new but the people watching now are different. They are informed, organized and determined to see justice done.

4.7 The Long Road to Justice

Civil society organizations including VOCAL Africa, legal networks and human rights defenders continue to fight for accountability. Petitions have been filed. Independent investigations are underway. Memorials are being documented. But the road is long and painful.

Ongoing Actions

- Legal representation for over 1,500 arrested protestors.
- Constitutional petitions on police impunity.

- Public interest litigation on internet shutdowns and censorship.
- Survivor support groups for trauma healing and rehabilitation
- Documentation of violations for submission to international mechanisms (e.g., UN Special Rapporteurs)

But no amount of litigation will bring back the dead. No court judgment can erase the scars of torture. Only full truth, acknowledgment and systemic reform can begin to heal the wounds of a country betrayed by its own government.

4.8 Conclusion: Blood on the State's Hands

The 2024 GenZ protests showed the best of Kenya's youth but also revealed the worst of its state. While young people marched with dignity and courage, the government responded with bullets and lies.

What happened was not a security operation. It was a coordinated campaign of repression. The blood spilled was not an accident, it was a message. However the message failed. The more they killed, the more the people rose.

The deaths and disappearances will haunt this country for years. But they will also inspire a new generation of human rights

defenders, artists, lawyers and truth tellers who now know that freedom is not given. It must be taken and defended.

Chapter 5

The Blossoming of Democracy: How a Generation Reclaimed Kenya and Redefined Citizenship

5.1 Introduction: From Pain, Power Was Born

In the middle of horror, something beautiful emerged. Amidst the smoke of tear gas and the screams of mothers burying their children, a new kind of Kenya was born. The 2024 GenZ protests may have been drenched in blood but they also fertilized the soil for a radical democratic awakening. This was not the democracy of politicians, of speeches and suits, or of handshakes and manifestos. It was the people's democracy - raw, painful, unpolished but real.

This movement marked a generational

shift in Kenyan politics. The youth, the very generation dismissed as apolitical and disengaged, became the stewards of the Constitution, the protectors of rights and the midwives of a new political culture.

This chapter details how, from the ashes of state repression, blossomed a deeply rooted, multi-dimensional and enduring form of people power. It wasn't perfect. It wasn't organized in the traditional sense but it was authentic, organic and alive.

5.2 The Birth of a Conscious Citizen

Before June 2024, many young Kenyans didn't attend town halls. They didn't know who their MP was. Some couldn't explain the budget process or describe what the Senate actually did. That changed dramatically during the GenZ movement.

What the Protests Unleashed:

- **Civic awakening:** Suddenly, youth were quoting the Constitution like gospel. Article 1 ("Sovereignty belongs to the people") became a mantra.
- **Personalization of governance:** MPs were no longer distant names. They became accountable figures whose votes were tracked and challenged.
- **Explosion of civic content:** Young people translated legal jargon into memes, infographics, short TikTok videos and Instagram stories.
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- **Community dialogue:** Youth met in church compounds, mosques, universities and barazas to teach each other rights, tax policy and governance structures.

One viral tweet put it best:

"The government
turned us into
constitutional scholars
overnight."

5.3 The Collapse of “Business as Usual” Politics

Kenya's post independence politics has been structured around ethnic alliances, money politics and elite betrayal. Political parties have often been little more than ethnic corporations in disguise. GenZ rejected all of it.

They demanded values over tribes, issues over alliances and accountability over blind loyalty.

Examples of the collapse

- Zero tolerance for opportunists: Politicians who tried to hijack protests were booed, heckled, and told, “Hatuna leader, we are the people.”

- No tribal slogans: There were no Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo chants. Only Kenyan chants: “Reject Finance Bill”, “We are tired!”, “Protect the Constitution!”
- No political T-shirts: This was not a movement in ODM orange or UDA yellow. Protestors wore black, red, green and the national flag.
- No political endorsements: Youth formed their own audit platforms and endorsed no candidate unless their record was clean.

This was a political detox, a purging of decades of manipulation, and it opened the door for fresh, issue based, values driven civic engagement.

5.4 The Emergence of People's Institutions

In the void left by a failed state and compromised political parties, new democratic institutions arose - informal, agile and deeply grounded in the people.

People's Parliament / “Occupy Parliament Tuesdays”

Every Tuesday, citizens gathered outside Parliament buildings to:

- Read out names of MPs who betrayed the people
- Host civic teach ins with lawyers and activists
- Share real time budget tracking
- Collect petitions from the public on pending bills
- Hold peaceful sit ins, sometimes all night

This consistent presence transformed Parliament Road into a civic shrine, where

the Constitution was no longer an abstract text but a living contract.

Digital Justice Platforms

Several online hubs were formed, including:

- **“We The People KE”:** A youth run digital hub for MP scorecards, constitutional updates and tax breakdowns.
- **“TunaAudit”:** A crowdsourced public finance tracker visualizing constituency development funds, project statuses and public procurement.
- **“Sauti Ya Ground”:** A TikTok and IG Live network of youth correspondents covering county corruption and citizen struggles from all 47 counties.

These were not funded by donors. They were built with passion, volunteerism and the urgency of lived experience.

5.5 Mutual Aid and Communal Responsibility

Democracy, for the GenZ movement, was not just about laws and leaders. It was also about how communities care for one another. When the government abandoned its people, the people took care of themselves.

What This Looked Like:

- **Emergency bail funds:** Raised in minutes online to release arrested youth.
- **Crowdfunded medical bills:** Protestors with gunshot wounds received treatment supported by thousands of small donations.

- **Safe houses:** Volunteer homes hosted survivors of abduction and torture.
- **Mental health clinics:** Therapists and counselors offered free group and individual sessions.

- **Feeding programs:** In Mathare, Kayole and Kibera, youth cooked and distributed meals during week long protest standoffs. This kind of solidarity based democracy is perhaps the most powerful blossom of all. It proved that true governance begins with compassion and community.

5.6 Women as Backbone of the Movement



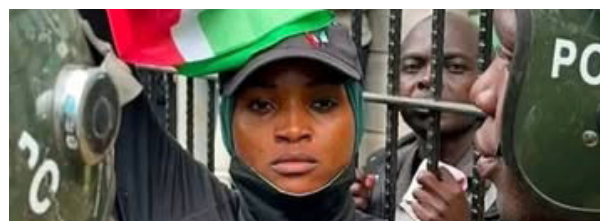
The story of Kenya's GenZ protests cannot be told without recognizing the frontline roles played by young women, who faced double layers of risk as protestors and as gender minorities in a patriarchal society.

Women Led:

- Legal aid desks at protests
- Online safety teams

- Street first aid teams
- Mental health check ins
- Documentation of police abuses

Women like Joan Atieno, a 19-year old law student who livestreamed from inside a tear gas cloud, became symbols of fearless civic engagement. Hanifa Adan raised over 30 million and administered the entire amount to victims and presented audited accounts. Shakira Wafula stood firm against police violence.



5.7 The Culture of Resistance: Memory, Art and Legacy

Long after the protests quieted, their cultural impact endured. Democracy was planted not just in laws but in language, music, murals, poems and prayer.

Ongoing Memorial Practices:

- Weekly memorial walks in towns where protestors were killed.
- Art exhibitions featuring portraits of the fallen, some hosted in public libraries, youth centers, even churches

- Protest art auctions to fund legal defense for detainees
- Spoken word nights in Nairobi and Kisumu dedicated to grief and resistance
- School clubs formed by high schoolers called "Justice Clubs" in honor of slain comrades

Democracy became not just an abstract idea. It became a ritual, a rhythm, a memory and a vow to never forget.

5.8 Civic Literacy on the Rise

The protests ignited a civic education renaissance across all levels of society:

- Youth YouTubers now host weekly governance and legal explainer shows.
- Online quizzes test knowledge on the Constitution, with thousands participating weekly.

- Local community leaders are hosting reading circles on the Bill of Rights.
- County level town halls are being demanded by youth as a constitutional right, not a political favor.

This literacy is generational. Children as young as 11 can now explain how a law is passed, what a supplementary budget is and how the judiciary can be petitioned.

5.9 A Movement Spreading Roots Across Africa

Kenya's GenZ protests have inspired youth across the continent.

Examples:

- Nigerian activists with the #EndSARS movement openly praised Kenya's TikTok-based mobilization.
- Ugandan youth facing repression shared Kenyan protest art and chanted "Kenya is awake, Uganda next!"

- Pan African influencers featured Kenya's uprising in web documentaries and international webinars.

Kenya is now seen as a beacon of youth civic innovation, showing that change doesn't need guns, only courage, clarity and connection.

5.10 Conclusion: This Is Only the Beginning

The 2024 GenZ Protests gave Kenya more than a policy reversal. They gave it a new national imagination. They showed what is possible when ordinary citizens decide to be extraordinary. They proved that democracy does not trickle down from elite negotiations but rather rises up from below, from the hands and hearts of a determined people.

The flower that bloomed in 2024 is still growing. Its roots are deep, its petals strong, and its seeds are already falling into the hearts of a new generation. Kenya has changed forever and the youth will never allow it to go back.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Let the Youth Lead. Let the Nation Heal. Let Kenya Rise

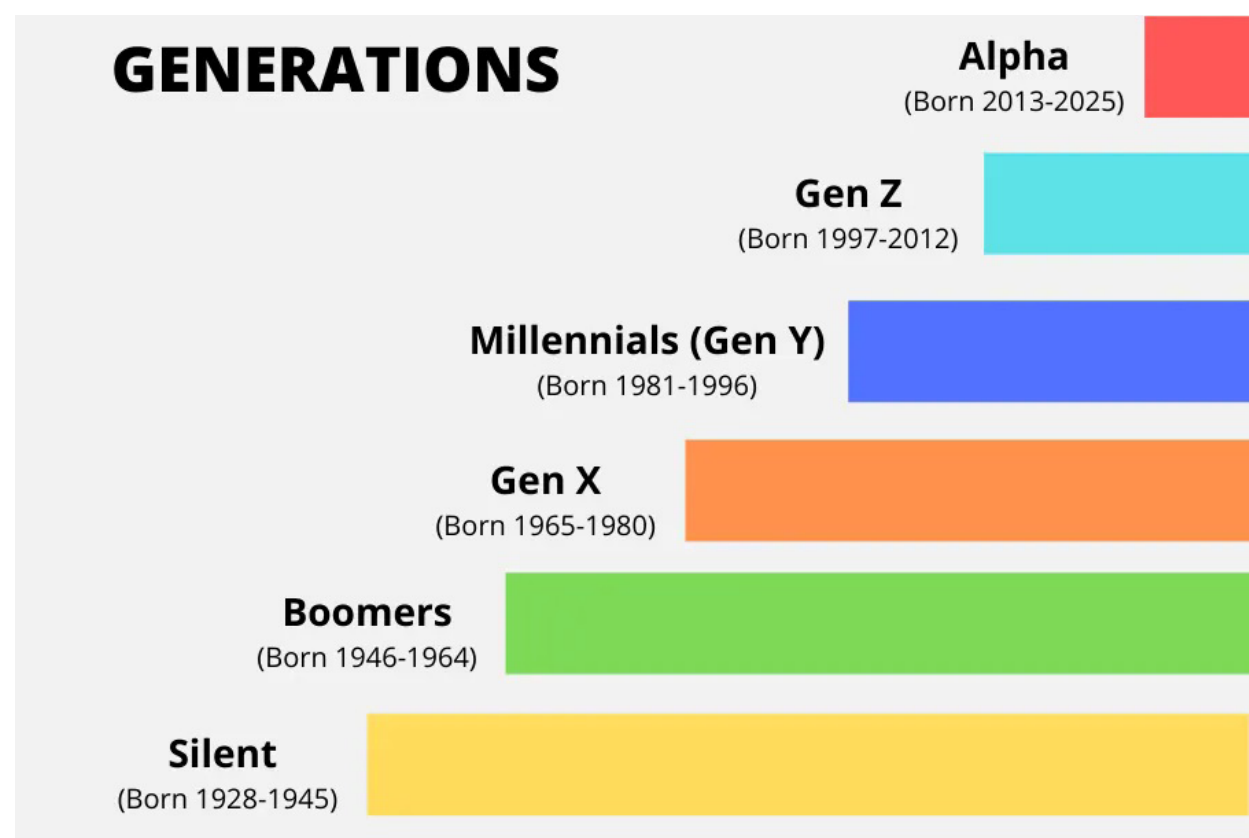
6.1 A Nation Forever Changed

The 2024 GenZ Protests marked a turning point in Kenya's democratic journey. It signified a rupture that exposed the cracks in our politics, yes, but also revealed the strength of our people. For months, the nation witnessed the courage of its youth, marching in the face of bullets, singing in the face of batons, organizing with no offices and caring for each other in ways the state never did.

It was painful. It was costly. It was bloody.

However it was also beautiful because out of that darkness came light. Out of grief came a stubborn kind of hope and out of the blood came the blossom of a democracy that is now too rooted to be uprooted.

6.2 The Generation That Refused to Be Silent



GenZ, Kenya's youngest generation, has often been misunderstood. Branded as distracted, disinterested, addicted to phones and entertainment and too young to know better. However, in June and July of 2024, they proved all of us wrong. They became teachers of the Constitution. They became warriors for justice. They became caregivers, healers, documentarians and digital warriors. They dared to tell the truth when doing so meant jail, torture or even death.

not protest to be appointed. They protested because they love Kenya deeply, and they saw it being destroyed before their eyes.

"We are not just angry," one protestor said during a vigil in Nakuru. "We are in love with a country that doesn't love us back yet but we're still trying."

This generation is not perfect but they are principled and they have earned the right not just to be heard, but to lead.

They did not march for positions. They did

6.3 A Call to the Nation: Let the Youth Lead

To the people of Kenya, especially the older generation, this is the moment of reckoning. The older generation has watched their children and grandchildren do what few dared to do and stood up, spoke and demand justice from a system that has always feared young voices.

The country is now asking of the older generation to:

- Trust the youth.
- Support the youth.
- Step aside when needed.
- Walk beside the youth when invited.

- Protect the youth when they are attacked.
- Let the youth move Kenya forward.

The older generation was once young, they once fought for democracy too in the days of the clamor for multiparty democracy, in the streets of Saba Saba, during the push for the 2010 Constitution. That spirit still lives and now it has found new carriers.

Let the older generation not fear the youth, not silence them, not shame them for using different tools such as memes instead of manifestos, TikTok instead of town halls, digital organizing instead of dusty politics. Let the youth lead. Kenya depends on it.

6.4 Healing Must Happen

Before we rebuild, we must heal. Kenya is wounded. Families are grieving. Mothers are broken. Friends are traumatized. Survivors are silent because their pain still chokes them.

The government must be held to account but healing will take more than justice in court. It will require truth. It will require apologies. It will require public recognition of the wrongs committed and it will require a national

effort to remember and honor the fallen.

Let us name their names. Let us build monuments. Let us teach their stories in schools. Let us write their songs and paint their portraits. Let us carry them in our hearts until this country becomes one they would have been proud to live in. Healing is not forgetting. It is choosing to grow from what we remember.

6.5 A New Kenya is Possible and It's Already Here

The Kenya that GenZ dreamed of is not an illusion. It is here, in small flashes:

- In the young medics treating strangers on the street.
- In the TikTokers teaching constitutional rights to millions.
- In the activists painting hope on the cracked walls of Kibra.
- In the student leading a public audit meeting in Kisii.
- In the single mother crowdfunding bail for arrested youth

- In the queer youth marching despite a society that excludes them
- In the young lawyer who just passed the bar and files their first habeas corpus for a protestor they've never met.

This is the Kenya we must now fight to build. Not just in protests but in policy. Not just in resistance but in reform. Not just in opposition but in creation. Let us move from protest to power, from rage to reform, from grief to growth and from silence to leadership.

6.6 A Promise to the Fallen: You Will Not Have Died in Vain

To the 63+ Kenyans who died in the 2024 GenZ Protests, Kenyans make this solemn vow:

We will remember you.

We will fight for justice in your name.

We will build the Kenya you dreamed of.

We will not allow silence to swallow your memory.

We will not stop until those who killed
you are held to account.

We will not rest until this country becomes
safe, fair, free and full of dignity for all.

You planted seeds with your lives. We will be
the gardeners.

6.7 The Blossom Has Roots Now

The flower of democracy that GenZ planted has not withered. It has taken root. In every protest, every debate, every vigil, every court petition, every new civic app, every song of justice and it grows stronger.

Kenya has changed. A door has opened that cannot be closed again. A spirit has awakened that cannot be silenced.

This movement was not the end. It was the beginning. Now, let us water it. Let us guard it. Let us grow it, together. Let the blood remind us what was lost. Let the blossom remind us what was found.

Let GenZ lead. Let Kenya rise. Let the future begin. Now.

Annex: Victims of extrajudicial killing/enforced disappearance (2024)

1.	Rex Maasai Kanyike (29)	49.	Shaquille Obieng Ramsfeld
2.	Austin Makoha (17)	50.	Abdikadir Saadia
3.	Michael Kihunga Nyaguthii (28)	51.	John musill Mulwa
4.	Kelvin Madanga Kagoni (25)	52.	Reagan Ouko
5.	Kennedy Onyango Ouma(12)	53.	Ian Ochieng
6.	Beasly Kogi Kamau (22)	54.	Denis Otieno Ochieng
7.	David Chege (40)	55.	Joash Ombati
8.	Kelvin Odhiambo Maina (17 -years)	56.	John waweru
9.	Ibrahim Kamau Wanjiru (19- years)	57.	Teko
10.	Caroline Shiramba (34 -years)	58.	Phillp
11.	Emmanuel Gigs (20-Years)	59.	Brain Musila
12.	Brain Kimutai Kwagiria (22- years)	60.	Lorraine Akinyi
13.	Anthony Macharia Mwangi (17- years)	61.	Emmanuel Tata
14.	Brain Kimathi Ringera (21- years)	62.	Austin Onyisa
15.	Kenneth Njeru (19- years)	63.	Abdi (Abdikadir) Kadir
16.	Wilson Sitati Wekesa (22-23 years)	64.	Ryan Mwendwa
17.	Brain Ezra Odhiambo(19)	65.	Christopher Wanjala
18.	Timothy Muchui(25)	66.	Frankline Ondwari
19.	Benson Mbithi Ouma aka "scott"(26)	67.	Kepher Ouma
20.	Tiller Odhiambo (20)	68.	Brain wambua
21.	Kelvin Ochieng Odhiambo	69.	Reagan Ouko
22.	Evans Kiratu	70.	Peter Mwacharia (27)
23.	Erickson Kyalo Musembi (26)	71.	Martin Edward Muthoni (19)
24.	Danzel Omondi Onyango (24)	72.	Emmanuel Kamau Mukuria (24)
25.	Anthony Kimeu	73.	Lilian Moseti
26.	Brain Kasaine Lemaiyan	74.	Kirui Chebet
27.	Gredo Oyaro aka Credo	75.	Daniel Kabuso
28.	Mathew Njoroge	76.	Maktar Tache
29.	Kelvin Mwawasi Andrew	77.	Bob Njagi(political activist, Free Kenya Movement)
30.	Erick Kayoni Kyeni	78.	Yusuf Hassan Ahmed
31.	Chris Gitonga	79.	Jamii longton
32.	Carlton Mwangi	80.	Martin Edward Muthoni
33.	Earnest Kanyi	81.	Aslam Longton (protester frontline)
34.	Dennis Juma	82.	Vincent Mido
35.	Bernard Kiplangat	83.	Nandia Nthai (Human Right Defender, lostinkenya.org)
36.	Francis Kipkorir	84.	Joshua Okayo (Law Student& Advocate Trainee)
37.	David Shaban Baraza	85.	Peter Macharia
38.	Dancan Onsongo	86.	Steve Kavingo Mbisi
39.	Bernard Mungai Nduati	87.	Billy wanyiri Mwangi (24)
40.	Phataleo Nakara Tarus	88.	Naomi aka@Jaber_totoo (20)
41.	Braxton Omeo	89.	Gideon Kibet aka Kibet Bull (24)
42.	Samuel Mutisya	90.	Rony Kiplang'at (brother of Gideon Kibet aka Kibet Bull)
43.	Wycliffe Kane Mwende	91.	Shadrack Kiprono (aka Shad Khalif)
44.	Daniel Kakai aka Dan		
45.	Titus Miheso		
46.	Charles Owino		
47.	Alex Muteti		
48.	Denis wanga Lubanga		

