



Peaceful Kenya's 2017 Elections: The Imperative of Calming Ethnic Fault Lines

A Proposed 7th multi-disciplinary seminar convened by Kipchumba Foundation in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Foundation at YMCA-Central, Nairobi, on Thursday 27 April 2017 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Introduction

There is nothing as precious as ensuring peaceful elections in Kenya in 2017. Kenya is a consociational democracy that has all along ensured that voters are mobilized to register and vote along ethnic lines. Since the advent of multi-party politics in 1991, ethnic mobilization has been very clear as much as economic inequality as a result. Winning the presidency, especially, has been associated with the concept of “eating” or “it is our turn to eat” ideology that has systematically excluded many other ethnic communities economically. This is a sheer product of the corruption prevalent in all facets of the Kenya's society and has been credited with making elections and occupying Government position matters of life and death among the elite.

Kenya in essence has become an elite extractive economy such that occupying a major Government position even for an hour is a suicidal mission. However, there are only two major ethnic communities that have successfully managed to produce the presidency in Kenya: the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu. They have equally managed to hold onto key economic determinants of the state, widening inequality between them and the others. Part of the grievances has been the resettlement of the Kikuyu in “Kalenjin and Mijikenda lands” by successive Governments and providing them with all the necessary support that the surrounding indigenous population had no access. This has resulted to the deadly land clashes witnessed in Rift Valley and Coastal regions of Kenya in 1991-1992, 1997, 2007-2008.

However, a classic case of the impact of competitive elections was witnessed in 2007-2008 post-election violence that claimed the lives of many innocent Kenyans and led to massive internal displacements that is still a problem to date. Thus, this seminar aims at discussing the context and best practices for ensuring peaceful general elections in Kenya in 2017 by drawing on past lessons.

Themes

- Ethnic inequality and fault lines
- Importance and ideal purpose of the presidency
- The role of middle level politicians
- The role of existing institutions
- Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) at the centre of peaceful elections
- The role of international observers and international organizations
- Dealing with post-election challenges
- The land question
- Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) Report recommendations

- Situating and directing the aspirations of young leaders
- Alternative political system and the future of Kenya