

Impeached Kenyan deputy president replaced by police-state enforcer Kithure Kindiki

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On Thursday, Kenya's Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua was removed from office after he was impeached by the country's Senate, becoming the first deputy president to be removed from office since impeachment was introduced in Kenya's 2010 constitution.

Kithure Kindiki, the blood-stained interior minister, has replaced Gachagua. Kindiki spearheaded the brutal suppression of the Gen-Z protests in June, July, and August, which resulted in at least 61 protesters being shot dead by the police, 67 enforced disappearances, and hundreds more injured.

Throughout this period, Kindiki repeatedly violated the constitution by banning protests and deploying state-sanctioned thugs to terrorise demonstrators. The year before the Gen-Z insurgency, he oversaw the killings of 71 anti-austerity protesters. In northern Kenya, under the guise of fighting "banditry," Kindiki directed police forces to kill hundreds of pastoralists, many of whom are displaced by capitalist-induced climate change.

Kindiki becomes deputy president as the government continues to escalate International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures, including tax hikes and privatisations.

The High Court has temporarily suspended Kindiki's appointment while it reviews Gachagua's appeal, which will be heard on Thursday.

Gachagua, a former member of parliament, was elected deputy president in August 2022 alongside President Ruto. His selection was a calculated move, part of the entrenched tribalist politics of Kenya's ruling class. A wealthy but relatively unknown corrupt businessman, Gachagua was chosen as Ruto's running mate to secure campaign funds and the support of the Kikuyu community—the largest ethnic group in Kenya—frustrated by the corruption and anti-working-class policies of outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta, who also hails from the same community.

During the Gen-Z protests, Gachagua fell out of favour with Ruto when he attempted to shift blame for the mass demonstrations, which saw millions take to the streets in opposition to the government's tax hikes in the Finance Bill 2024 and demanding Ruto's resignation, onto the National Intelligence Service (NIS). Gachagua publicly criticised the NIS, accusing it of "failing" to properly inform Ruto and senior police officials about the growing unrest among youth and workers, suggesting that the agency had "slept on the job."

His remarks were seen by Ruto as undermining him at a time when he was enforcing brutal crackdowns on protesters, supported

by both the European Union and Washington.

Relations continued to sour, with Ruto sidelining Gachagua as he maneuvered to withdraw the unpopular tax hikes to buy time to install a new "broad-based" government backed by the US and the European Union—a coalition of Ruto's Kenya Kwanza Party and the main opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by billionaire Raila Odinga to continue to impose IMF austerity. Together, they are now reinstating the unpopular tax hikes that were withdrawn from Finance Bill 2024, while abandoning its promises to investigate police officers responsible for brutal repression.

The impeachment process over the past weeks has been a complete charade, in which workers had no stake. The Senate voted to impeach Gachagua on five of the 11 charges brought against him, following a similar motion that was overwhelmingly approved by 281 MPs, with only 44 voting against and one abstention, in the National Assembly the week prior. The impeachment was supported by a majority from both Ruto's Kenya Kwanza and Odinga's ODM. The charges included "gross violations", such as undermining the Constitution, corruption, practising ethnically divisive politics, threatening judges, and undermining government.

Notably, Gachagua was cleared of corruption and money laundering charges, despite having amassed over \$40 million in just two years. Many senators likely viewed his removal on corruption grounds as setting a dangerous precedent, given that they too are part of the entrenched looting system that siphons billions from Kenya's public coffers annually. Were the corrupt elements to be weeded out of parliament, its chambers would sit empty.

That the whole government is corrupt was laid bare during the vetting process of the new ministers after Ruto dissolved and restructured his cabinet, reinstating eight individuals. The most glaring examples came from the dramatic increases in personal wealth declared by several ministers.

The net worth of Kindiki, the new Deputy President, surged by approximately \$1 million (Ksh.150 million) in just 20 months. Housing Minister Wahome's wealth jumped from \$1.46 million to \$2.18 million. Defense Minister Soipan Tuya saw her wealth rise from \$1.05 million to \$1.63 million, a gain of \$580,000. Environment Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale reported a \$860,000 increase. Tourism Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano declared a \$320,000 rise. Youth Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen,

formerly in the Roads Ministry, disclosed a 12.73 percent increase in his net worth, from \$3.85 million in 2022 to \$4.34 million. All attributed their wealth increases to “various investments.”

The main cited reason for the Senate removing Gachagua was over his role in stoking tribalism. Gachagua comes from the Kikuyu tribe, the largest tribe representing 17 to 22 percent of the population, while Ruto comes from the Kalenjin, the third-largest tribe, representing 12 to 13 percent of the population. Tribalism has long been used by Kenyan capitalist politicians since independence to divide workers and the rural masses along ethnic lines.

In March last year, during an event in Kericho County—mostly inhabited by the Kalenjin—Gachagua said, “This government is a company that has shares. There are owners who have the majority of shares, some with just a few, while others have none. You invested in this government, and you must reap.” In February this year, speaking in Nyeri, mostly inhabited by Kikuyu, he said, “Our community must benefit from this government because we voted overwhelmingly for President Ruto.”

Such comments were seen as implying that only the tribes that supported Ruto, deserve government appointments and development projects, sparking accusations of tribal favouritism. But Gachagua’s practice of communalist politics was fully backed by Ruto himself, who said earlier this year at a rally with Gachagua by his side that the residents of Murang’a—regarded as the Kikuyu heartland—are “major shareholders” of the government.

Ruto has a long history of inciting tribalism. He was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for inciting ethnic hatred in Kenya’s 2007-2008 post-election violence. He played a key role in planning and organizing tribalist violence at that time against the Kikuyu, which left over 1,200 dead and over 600,000 internally displaced. Kindiki was part of Ruto’s legal defense team. The case was eventually dropped after witnesses disappeared, and the Washington lost interest in backing Ruto’s prosecution once he became deputy president under the government of Uhuru Kenyatta (2013–2022).

Throughout the impeachment process, the only moment workers and the rural masses have had any say was during the public hearings on the impeachment, a required process to impeach a deputy president. The public hearings across the country rapidly backfired on Ruto, as they turned into a referendum on the whole government. Thousands turned out in public forums, once again cutting across tribal lines like during the Gen-Z protests. Many chanted “do away with the bus conductor and the driver”, “No Gachagua, No Ruto”, and “Ruto must go!”

Ruto meanwhile is continuing to escalate privatisations to pay back the IMF. It has imposed a 30-year Ketraco-Adani deal worth \$641 million. Under this agreement, the Indian conglomerate Adani will manage Kenya’s energy transmission infrastructure for three decades, before handing it over back to Kenya Electricity Transmission Company Limited (KETRACO)—the state-owned corporation in Kenya responsible for building and operating high-voltage electricity transmission infrastructure. It comes months after the deal with Adani to run Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Kenya’s main airport, via a 30-year build, operate and transfer arrangement, widely opposed by airport workers who have

repeatedly gone on strike.

Ruto is also set to implement a new tax policy by December 2024 that will require mobile money platforms widely used across Kenya, such as M-Pesa, and banks to link their numbers to the Kenya Revenue Authority, a move aiming to levy new taxes on untapped transactions used by tens of millions of Kenyans.

The installation of Kindiki as deputy president proves that the entry of the ODM opposition into government was not aimed at lessening austerity, attacks on democratic rights and its alliance with US imperialism. Ruto’s aim was to defuse the protests while preparing to escalate repression. He has now installed as the second highest ranking position in power, with the backing of ODM, the person most associated with the police violence against the Gen-Z protests.

Workers and youth must draw political lessons from the upheavals over the past year. The only way to oppose and defeat the shift towards dictatorship is by building an independent movement of the working class and youth that opposes all factions of the bourgeoisie. This movement must be rooted in the fight for socialism, both across Africa and internationally, as a means to struggle against IMF-imposed austerity, escalating wars, and the growing police-state repression—all products of the capitalist system.

In this struggle, workers cannot rely on the trade unions. Over recent months, mass strikes by teachers, civil servants, healthcare workers, airport staff, and university lecturers, protesting low wages, precarious working conditions, and privatisation, have been consistently betrayed by the unions. It is part of the “industrial peace” promises made by the COTU General Secretary Francis Atwoli, who was also a key architect in the Ruto-Odinga government set up.

A crucial step in providing a political perspective for struggle is to draw lessons from the analysis laid out in the three-part series, “Kenya’s Gen Z insurgency, the strike wave and the struggle for Permanent Revolution”.



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