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BATUK's Crimes and Accomplices in High Places

The British Army Training Unit in Kenya (BATUK) makes news for atrocities and illnesses and not for its stated role. It was in the news again on the 12th and 13th January 2025, for crimes its members did 13 years ago, the responsibility for which the British government has been trying to shift to a compromised Kenyan government.

BATUK's Criminal Record

BATUK has crafted and maintained a disturbing legacy in Kenya of murder, running over pedestrians, and burning down ranches and farmlands, a reputation that runs contrary to UK's declared aim of "working together (with Kenya), enabling troops for operations and exercises, and countering threats across the globe". The UK's stated aim progressively appears as a façade for maintaining British military imperialism over Kenya, with the connivance of some Kenyan government officials. The British Army's crimes against Kenyans have been widely reported by international and local media.

BATUK's behavior is not only a failure of justice, but England's attempt to maintain its colonial attitudes toward Kenya

For instance, an October 2023 documentary on the Sky News featured a Kenyan family appealing for justice for their Kin, a young woman named Agnes Wanjiru that entered a hotel in the company of BATUK soldiers alive, but was discovered strangled to death and dumped into a septic tank, after a commotion was heard in the room they were in, back 2012. A similar documentary ran on Kenya's Citizen TV on the 12th and 13th January 2025, depicting the same family calling for justice, 13 years after the crime was done. No explanation exists as to why the UK Military has failed to take disciplinary action or initiate

criminal proceedings against the soldiers involved. The question of when Kenyans will receive justice for BATUK's crimes, and who will finally tame British racism in Kenya remains to be answered.

Racist UK and Kenya's Apathetic Leadership

One Kenyan interviewed in the aforementioned Citizen TV documentary noted that the British government promptly addresses similar atrocities done in Cyprus, but chooses to undermine the Kenyan government and its sovereignty due to racism. There is compelling evidence linking BATUK soldiers to the murder of Agnes Wanjiru and running over and hence ruining the life of another girl in Archer's Post, Samburu. Equally, strong evidence including soldiers' confession link BATUK to a fire incident that destroyed hundreds of acres of pristine nature and farms in Lolldaiga. Also, one British military vehicle ran over a man and killed him during this fire incidence. However, the media obfuscates by reporting that the crimes are "alleged". Surprisingly, the British leadership, confident of how firmly it has captured some in the Kenyan government insists on having local authorities investigate to find perpetrators whom it shields, forgetting that it is accountable for crimes done by its military under international human rights law.

Some findings of The Kenyan Parliamentary Committee investigating BATUK's atrocities, as alluded by the committee chair Wilson Koech revealed that the units' operations in Kenya will continue without the UK guaranteeing to reduce its (BATUK's) crimes and helping to settle past ones. From the above allusion, the Kenyan leadership appears emasculated and unwilling to discuss why the UK, an arrogant colonial country that conducted a genocide in Kenya in the 1950s and 60s, should still have military bases in Kenya. Koech only mentioned that his committee insisted that British soldiers who murder Kenyans be charged in the country, a status quo that has not helped in delivering justice for Wanjiru, 13 years later.

The Kenyan Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI) has been on the case all along but has not authorized prosecution, which shows that it cannot reasonably conclude such crimes, while the UK military has shown no interest in holding its own to account. The prospect of having UK soldiers in Kenya who commit crimes that the Kenyan justice system cannot handle, while the UK government shields them, makes it logical to expel them altogether. Sadly, the parliamentary committee mentioned earlier seemed uninterested in discontinuing BATUK's atrocious presence or including a provision in the agreement that murder done by BATUK members on Kenyans can lead to the closure of UK military bases in the East African country. The Kenyan government at the highest level is unconcerned about securing Kenyans' lives and dignity from the UK's military structure.

Nonexistent Internal Accountability in the British Army

The British military like others has or must have internal systems of upholding the law such that soldiers who break the military code or UK laws are punished. Therefore, BATUK's behavior is not only a failure of justice but England's attempt to maintain its colonial attitude toward Kenya, presented as a military alliance. If BATUK was serious about upholding justice, it could have displayed its mechanisms for internal accountability, anchored in the country's law. Also, it should have instituted an internal investigation in line with Geneva conventions, and UK's Offences against the Person Act of 1861, since the perpetrators returned to the Country. Failure to apply such laws shows that it does not view Kenyans as deserving legal protection, despite its pushing of a false narrative that the Commonwealth countries fall under the same legal regime. It also shows that the UK does not value Kenya's partnership. Importantly, its shielding and absolving of soldiers from responsibility shows that BATUK members are a risk to Kenyans and should move to the UK as opposed to waiting for them to commit another crime.

If the British soldiers can be killing, and injuring Kenyans, and hence ruining livelihoods, it is illogical for the UK to even think of presenting itself as Kenya's ally. The UK's behavior shows duplicity, while the Kenyan government's playing along shows an untenable willingness to accept British colonialism in the 21st century. The Kenyan leadership is unfortunately subordinating itself to the British instead of demanding respect for its citizens and equal partnership with the UK government. The parliamentary committee and DCI's decision to abandon Kenyans as they face British arrogance is sad and may make citizens to think of other ways of protecting themselves. The Kenyan government, or its potentially compromised officials' sitting back as citizens in Lolldaiga live in land scarred by BATUK's white phosphorus borders on treachery.

Going forward

The UK should understand that it is accountable for all crimes done by BATUK under international human rights law, and should find and punish perpetrators. Meanwhile, the Kenya government should assert its sovereignty and demand equality by standing for Kenyans' justice. It should hold BATUK to account for murder, violence, and environmental degradation. The killing of Wanjiru and other crimes remind Kenyans of the atrocities done by the British during colonialism and may wear-out Kenyans' patience. On the other hand, the Kenyan government has a responsibility to expeditiously investigate and charge BATUK soldiers that violate citizen's rights and degrades the environment. Therefore, The DCI should conclude investigations that can lead to charging and holding BATUK soldiers too

accountable to deter future violations. If this is not done, the citizens may choose to take their safety into their own hand and defend themselves against the British and their accomplices in the Kenyan government, as it happened in the 1950s.

Simon Chege Ndiritu, January 24, 2025

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