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Kenya Government Urged to Bolster Security to Prevent Violence

by Peter Clotey

The vice president of the East Africa Law Society has called on Kenya's government to prosecute those behind the latest violent clash between two ethnic groups in Kenya. The conflict, which occurred Tuesday in the eastern Tana River region, left at least 48 people dead.

James Mwamu also called on the administration to strengthen security measures to prevent a repeat of the 2007-2008 post-election violence as the country readies for new elections next year.

"This is very worrying because in the next few months we would be going for general elections [and] the election rhetoric is about to rise up," said Mwamu.

"When you have proliferation of arms in the hands of wrong people, [when] people are being killed, it is important that the government should step in and do something," he said.

Kenyan police have begun investigating the violent clash in the Tana River region. Residents said at least 100 members of the Pokomo clan raided a village inhabited by members of the Orma group, late Tuesday.

Government spokesman, Alfred Mutua described the attack as unfortunate, but added that the administration is taking steps to prevent future conflicts.

Officials linked Tuesday's fighting to an ongoing dispute over land and water between the Pokomo and the Orma groups.

Police believe the violence was a retaliatory attack for a clash earlier this month that left two people dead.

Mwamu said the government should be proactive to protect citizens.

"We think that the government has been handling this matter very casually," he said. "There is a lot of lack of concern [because] in the past two years we have lost lives through activities of militants who have been coming from Somalia. Right now we have clans killing one another, this is unacceptable.

"If the government has lost the will to defend its people, they should call for a general election so that a new person can be elected who has the desire to do this," he added.

Mwamu said the government should carry out its constitutional mandate, which he said is to protect citizens.