

Trends of Violent Extremist Attacks and Arrests in Kenya, January – December 2021

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About this report

This report draws from the Terror Attacks and Arrests Observatory of the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS Terrorism Observatory). It presents the latest data collected, disaggregated and analysed from 1 January – 31 December 2021. CHRIPS uses verified traditional and new media reports and information from local partners, as useful indicators, to generate a comprehensive database on terror-related occurrences in Kenya.

Key highlights

- Attacks decreased from 69 (in 2020) to 51 reported in 2021
- Six counties affected: 28 attacks in Mandera; 12 in Lamu; eight in Wajir; one in Garissa; one in Kwale; and one in Kisumu
- 100 people were killed in 2021 terror attacks compared to 122 in 2020
- 73 people injured: 49 security officials; 18 civilians; two *Al Shabaab* militants; and four unidentified persons
- 17 people kidnapped: 16 civilians and one government official
- 39 people arrested for terror-related offences: three women; 31 men; 5 people gender not specified
- 11: the highest number of arrested persons recorded in Mandera and Mombasa Counties in several incidents.
- Nationalities of those arrested: 7 Kenyans; nine foreign nationals; and 20 undisclosed

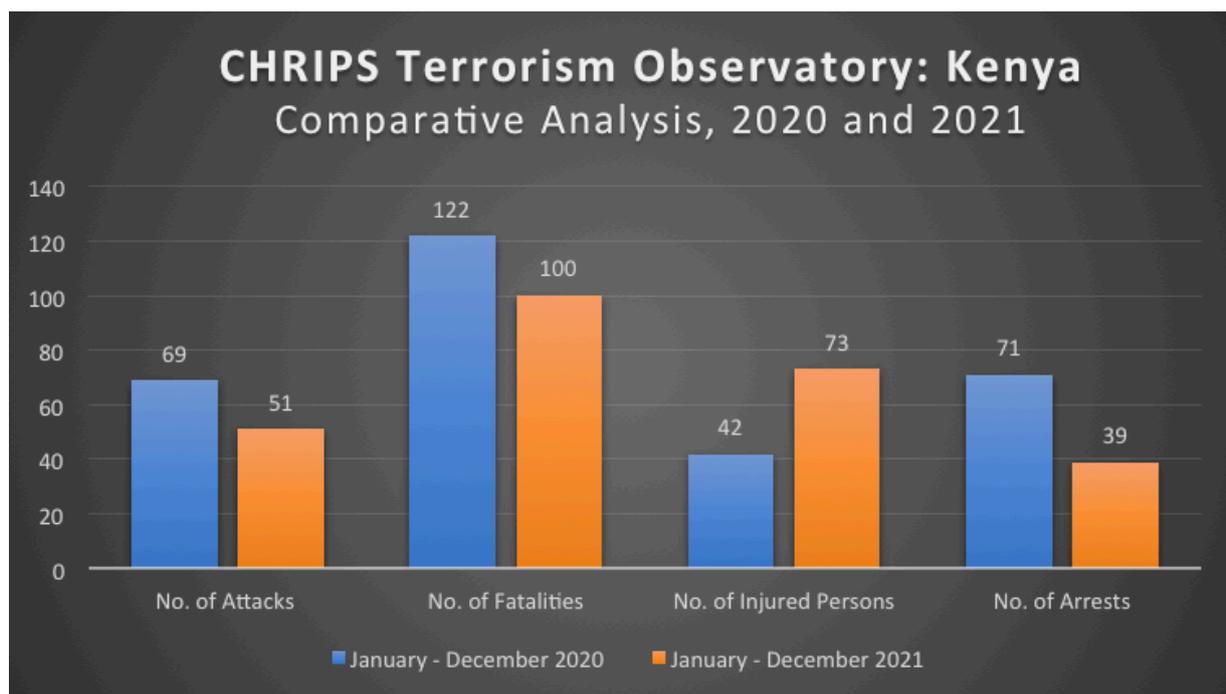


Figure 1: Comparative analysis, 2020 and 2021

Terror Attacks

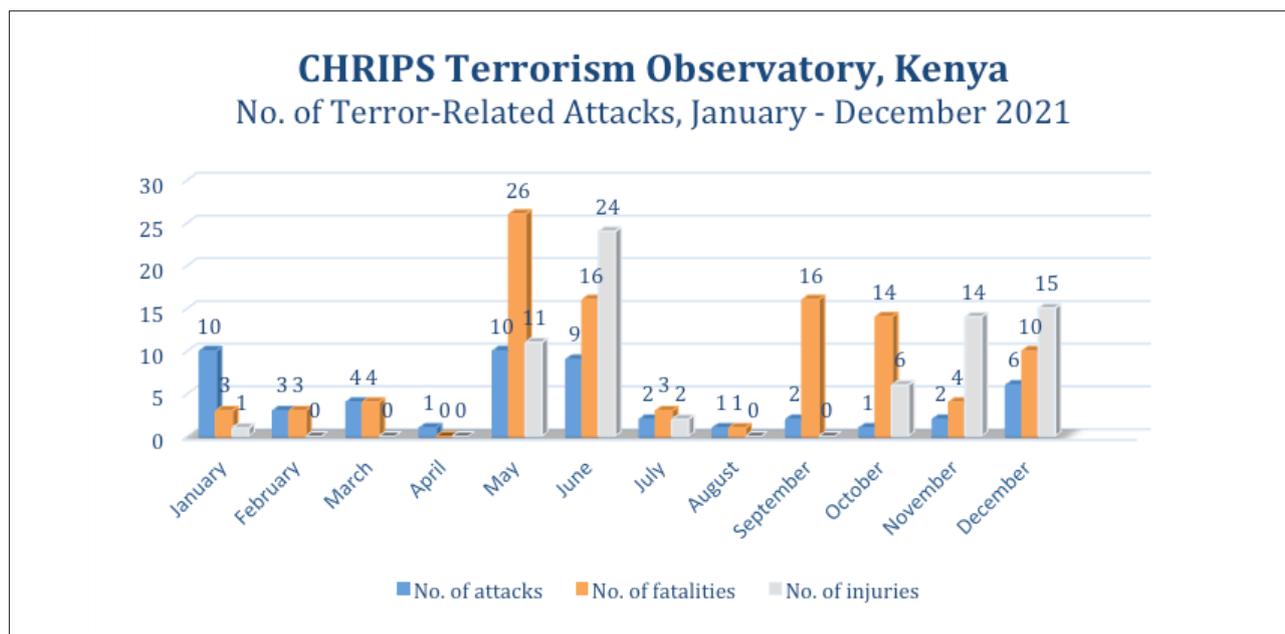


Figure 2: Number of terror-related attacks, January – December 2021

In 2021, 51 terror-related attacks were reported. This is a 74% decrease compared to 69 attacks recorded in 2020. As illustrated in figure two above, attacks intensified in January decreasing from February to April and intensified again in May and June. They later decreased from July to November with a slight increase in December. January and May recorded the highest number of attacks.

The highest number of fatalities was recorded in May when 26 people were killed due to terror attacks. During this month, suspected *Al Shabaab* militants attacked security officials employing Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) on a Kenya National Intelligence Service (NIS) Landcruiser. This attack resulted in the death of at least eight officers with several others

injured. The officers were on their way to the Kenya-Somali border where construction of the wall is ongoing.¹ In the period under review, *Al Shabaab* only claimed responsibility for the 25 February attack at Sheikh Barrow village in Mandera county that left one Kenya patrol border police dead.² There were no fatalities recorded in April.

June recorded the highest number of injuries with 24 people being injured from terror-related incidents. In an incident in June, two buses accompanied by police were attacked Between Olla and Sarman in Mandera county. 11 people were injured including two police officers and nine civilians.³ There were no injuries recorded in February, March, April, August and September.

¹ Sanga, B and Bwana, J (2021) "Eight KDF soldiers feared dead in Lamu IED explosion" Standard Media, 18 May, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/coast/article/2001413213/eight-kdf-soldiers-feared-dead-in-lamu-ied-explosion>

² ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acleddata.com

³ Ombati, C (2021) "Cops among three killed in Mandera buses gun attack", Hiraan, June 9, https://www.hiraan.com/news4/2021/Jun/182852/cops_among_three_killed_in_mandera_buses_gun_attack.aspx

Location of attacks

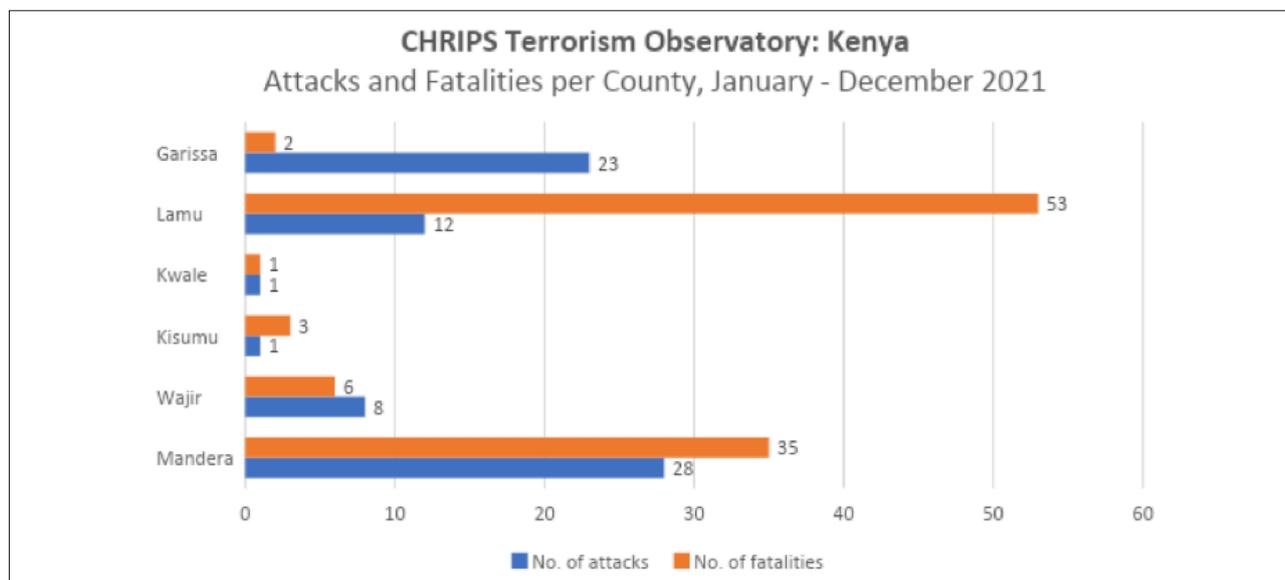


Figure 3: Attacks and fatalities per County, January – December 2021

In the period under review, most of the attacks occurred in the northeastern region of Kenya in areas close to the Kenya-Somali border. The attack in Kisumu involved an alleged *Al Shabaab* returnee who used a suicide bomb to kill himself and his family. His sister sustained injuries from the incident which took place at their home at Katito, Nyakach.⁴ In Kwale County, police raided a suspected terrorist hideout where they

recovered suspicious items killing one suspect while two others escaped with gunshot wounds.⁵

Lamu recorded the highest number of fatalities at 53 resulting from 12 attacks reported during the period under review. An attack reported in September left 15 *Al Shabaab* militants burnt beyond recognition after their vehicle ran over an IED device that had been planted by another *Al Shabaab* group.⁶

Targets

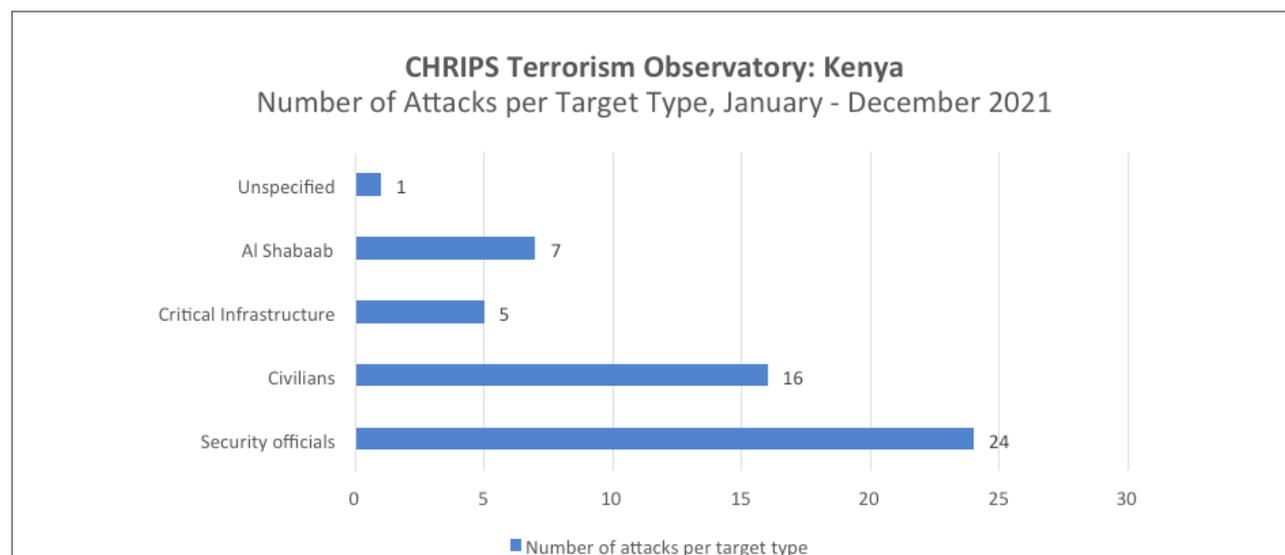


Figure 4: Number of attacks per target type, January – December 2021

⁴ Alal, M (2021) "Suicide bomber among three killed in Kisumu blast" The Star, 8 December, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2021-12-08-suicide-bomber-among-three-killed-in-kisumu-blast/>

⁵ Owino, W (2021) "Police kill suspected Al Shabaab terrorist; list of attack targets, 736 bullets recovered" The Standard, June 23 <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/coast/article/2001416483/police-kill-suspected-al-shabaab-terrorist-list-of-attack-targets-763-bullets-recovered>

⁶ Praxides, C (2021) "15 Shabaab militants killed in Lamu IED explosion" 27 September, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2021-09-27-15-shabaab-militants-killed-in-lamu-ied-explosion/>

Like in previous years most of the attacks in 2021 were targeted at security officials mostly in transit. In May, for example, six attacks were targeted at security officials, three of these being by use of IEDs set on roads. Several attacks targeted at construction workers and security officials on their way to the Kenya-Somali border wall under construction were recorded in the period under review.

In the period under review, five attacks were targeted at critical infrastructure particularly communication masts that raised concerns as reports indicate that destruction of critical instalments could be part of a major attack.⁷ 16 attacks were targeted at civilians mostly on public transportation.

Three civilians were killed in a gun attack on two passenger buses in Mandera by suspected *Al Shabaab* militants.⁸ Civilians targeted in transit also include an attack on a lorry ferrying miraa that was ambushed at Jabibar within Lafey on Elwak-Rhamu road. Three civilians were killed and two others were injured.⁹

Seven attacks targeting *Al Shabaab* militants were recorded in the year which involved security officials ambushing militants in their hideouts, for example in a security operation at Boni forest.¹⁰ In May, 8 security officials went missing in unclear circumstances when they went to neutralise *Al Shabaab* militants at the Mangai area in Lamu county.¹¹

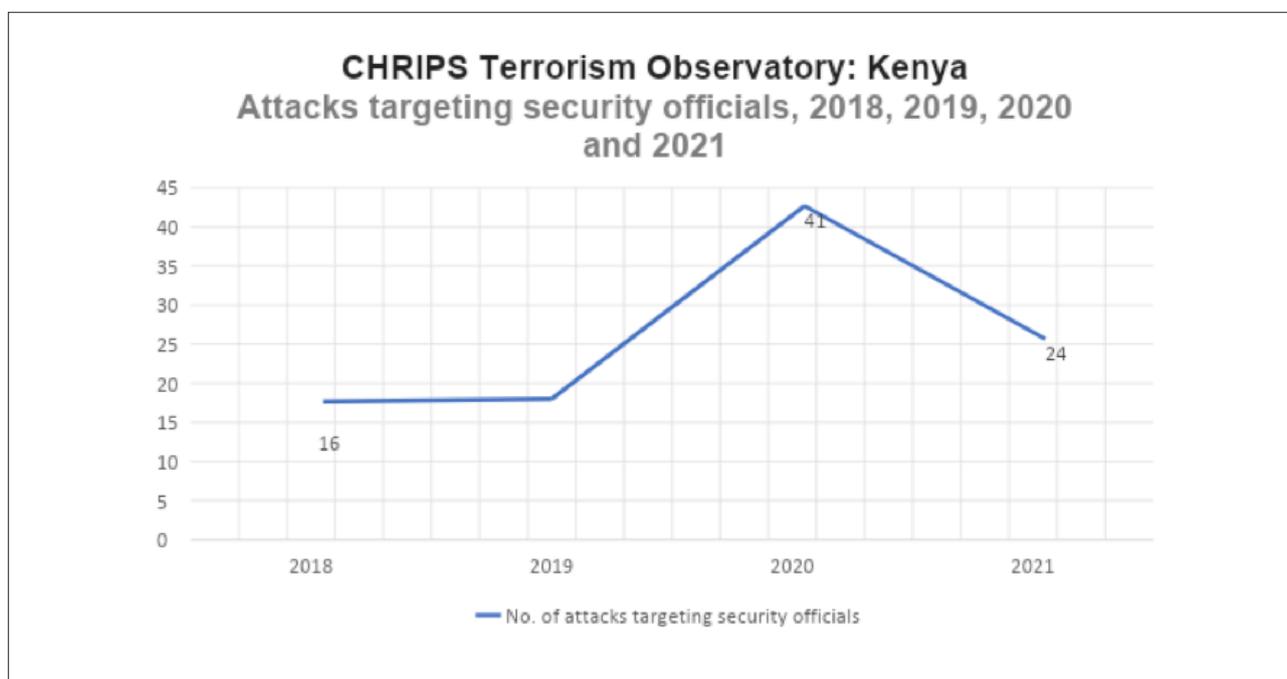


Figure 5: Number of attacks targeting security officials 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

As shown in figure 5, the number of attacks targeting security officials recorded a sharp decrease. Security officials were the target of 24 attacks in 2021 compared to 41 attacks last year. This was a 59% decrease. Most

of the attacks targeted at security officials were by suspected *Al Shabaab* militants using IEDs. These attacks mostly took place in Mandera County.

⁷ Otsialo, M (2021) "Kenya: Concern as Al Shabaab militants spread across Mandera county", All Africa, 16 February, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202102170193.html>

⁸ Ombati, C (2021) "Cops among three killed in Mandera buses gun attack", Hiraan, June 9, https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2021/Jun/182852/cops_among_three_killed_in_mandera_buses_gun_attack.aspx

⁹ Otsialo, M (2021) "Kenya: 3 Police Officers Injured in Suspected Al-Shabaab Attack", All Africa, June 22 <https://allafrica.com/stories/202106230074.html>

¹⁰ Rashid, R (2021) "Two Al Shabaab suspects killed in security operation in Boni forest", Citizen digital, June 5 <https://citizen.digital/news/two-al-shabaab-suspects-killed-in-security-operation-in-boni-forest-11786939>

¹¹ Tongola, M (2021) "Cop return to camp 17 days after vanishing during raid on Al Shabaab hideout", The Standard, June 3 <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/national/article/2001414698/cop-returns-to-camp-17-days-after-vanishing-during-raid-on-al-shabaab-hideout>



Figure 6: Terror-related kidnappings, January – December 2021

Similar to 2020, civilians and government officials were victims of kidnapping in 2021. 16 civilians and one government official were reported to have been abducted by Kenyan security agencies and suspected *Al Shabaab* militants for terror-related reasons. *Al Shabaab* militants abducted a Chief from his hotel

in Lafey town, Mandera County, in August and a total of 11 civilians in Mandera, Garissa and Wajir counties.¹²The number of kidnappings recorded in 2021 decreased by 68% compared to 25 people who were reported to have been abducted in 2020.

Fatalities and Injured persons

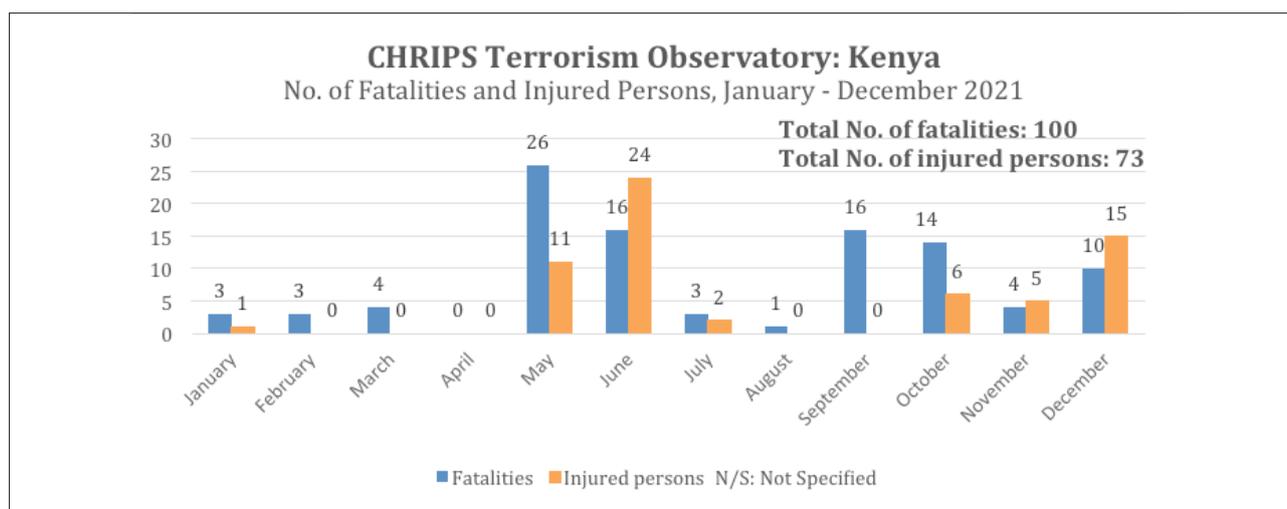


Figure 7: Number of fatalities and injured persons, January – December 2021

26 of the 100 fatalities reported in 2021 took place in May while 24 of the reported injuries happened in June. There were no fatalities or injuries recorded in April. There also were no injuries recorded in February, March, August and September.

¹² ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acledata.com

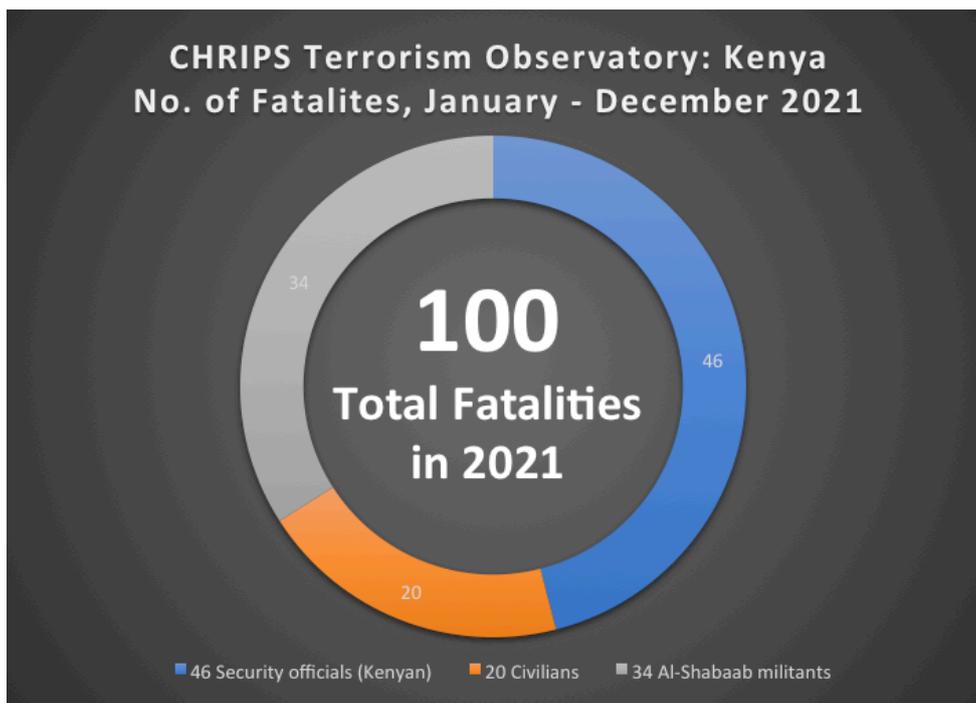


Figure 8: Number of fatalities, January – December 2021

The highest number of fatalities recorded was of security officials. A total of 46 officers were killed in Lamu, Mandera and Wajir counties. There were 34 *Al Shabaab* militants and 20 civilians killed in 2021.

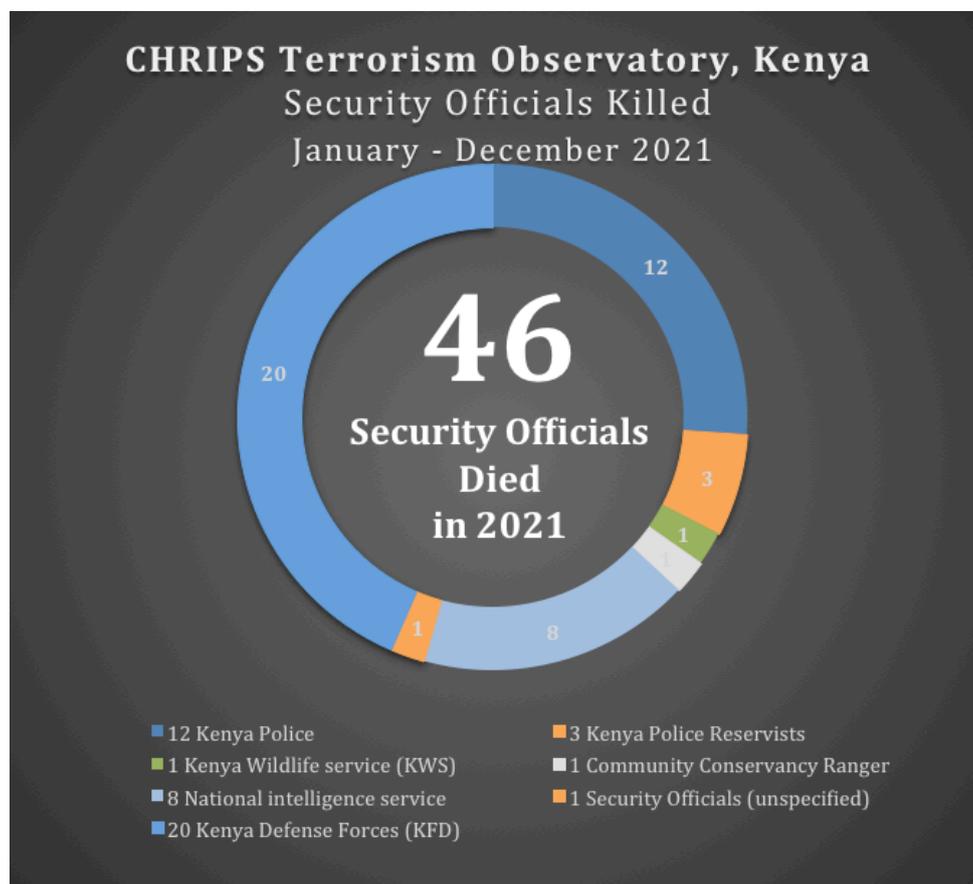


Figure 9: Security Officials killed, January – December 2021

Compared to 2020, there was an increase in categories of security agencies who lost their lives. One community conservancy ranger died in November when their vehicle headed to Kiunga Town on the border of Lamu with Somalia from Mararani ran over an IED. A Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) officer died when their vehicle was ambushed by suspected *Al Shabaab* militants immediately after they had hit an IED. In May, eight National Intelligence service (NIS) officers died from an attack in Lamu. Suspected

Al Shabaab militants attacked a police camp at Khrof Arar area, Wajir County in February where an unspecified number of casualties were reported including security officials.¹³ In December, a gang of five militants ambushed a mosque in Wajir County looking for a police reservist who was also an imam while another police reservist was targeted at his home in Wajir in May where suspected *Al Shabaab* militants shot and killed the reservist's class seven son before they were dispersed by a police reservist team.¹⁴

Weapons used

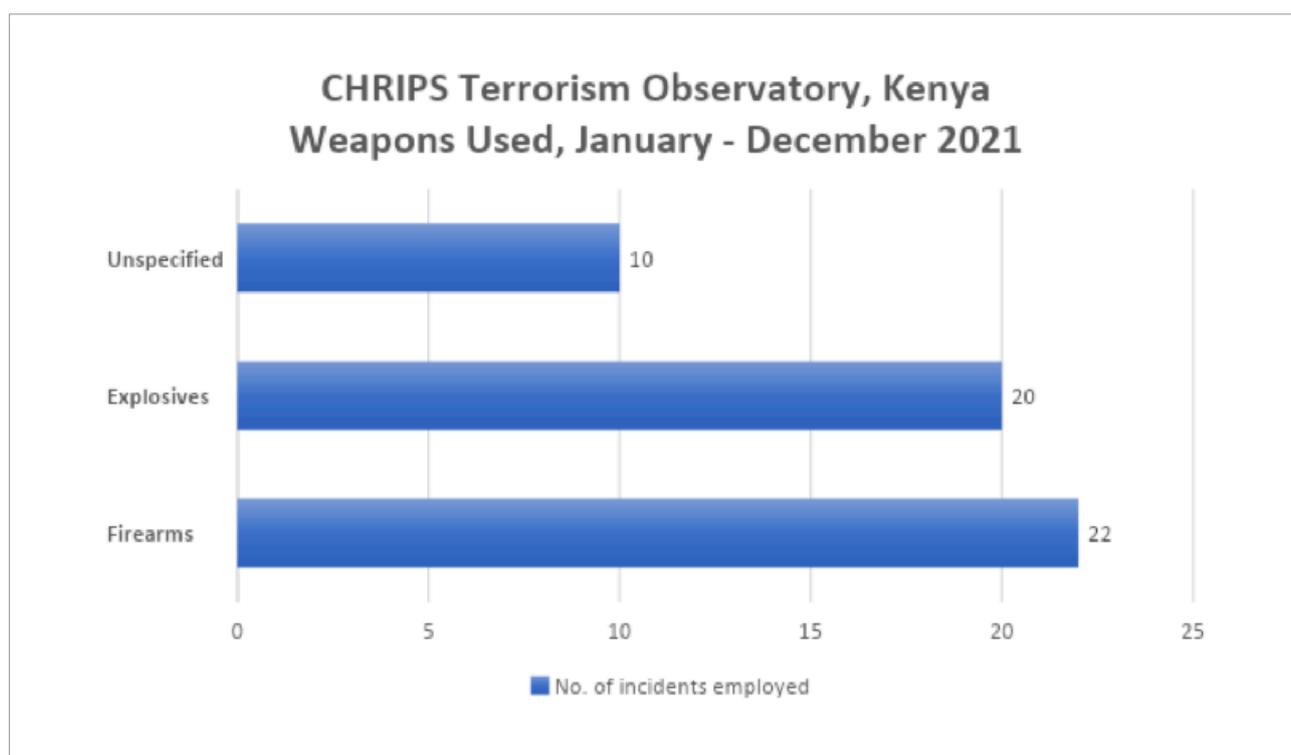


Figure 10: Weapons used, January – December 2021

Firearms were used in 22 incidents during the period under review. Eight of the reported incidents took place in June and entailed the use of firearms. Firearms were also used in attacks targeting civilians in villages and towns. For instance, in an attack in Wajir, a gang of five militants raided a mosque with firearms before being dispersed by local police reservists in December.¹⁵

Explosives were used in 20 of the 51 incidents recorded in 2021. Reports show that they were mainly IEDs planted on the roads. The use of IEDs was also reported in an attack by alleged *Al Shabaab* militants in November targeting a KDF convoy. Three soldiers died with 12 others injured.¹⁶

¹³ ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acleddata.com

¹⁴ ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acleddata.com

¹⁵ ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acleddata.com

¹⁶ ACLED. (2021). "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 2021, www.acleddata.com

Terror-related arrests

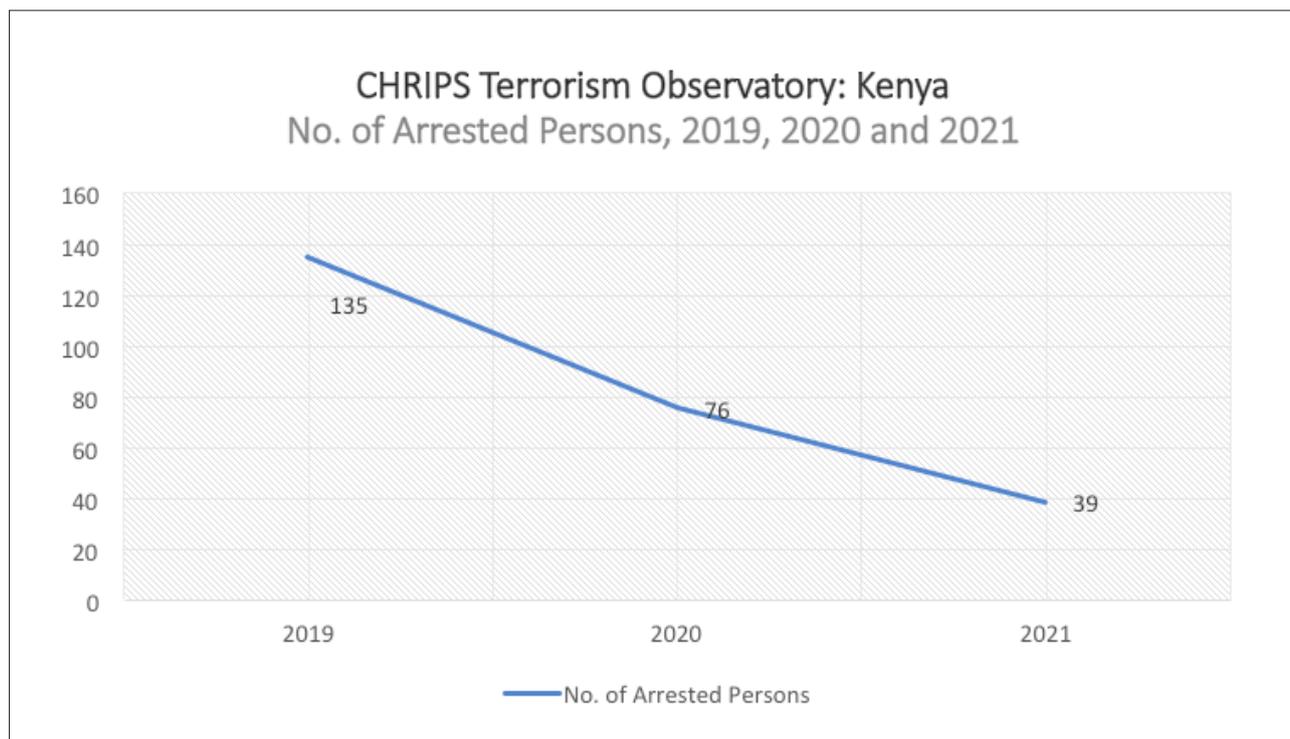


Figure 11: Number of arrested persons, 2019, 2020 and 2021

39 people were arrested in 2021. This is a decrease from 2020 and 2019 when 76 and 135 people were arrested respectively.

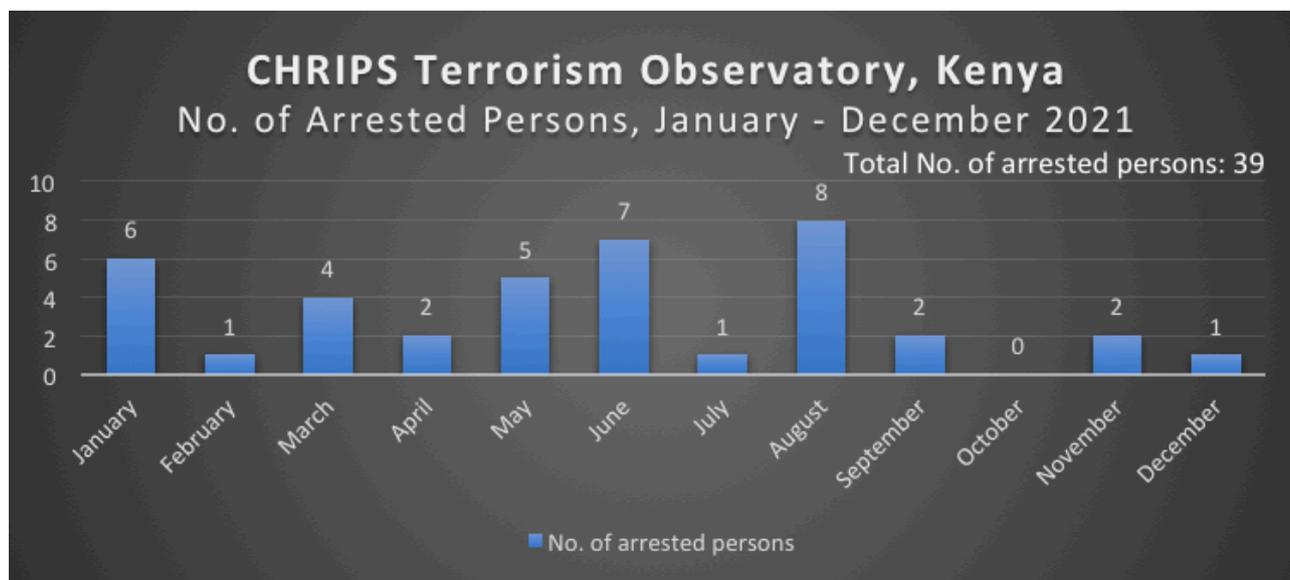


Figure 12: Number of arrested persons, January – December 2021

August recorded the highest number of arrests in connection to terrorism. In addition, an undisclosed number of suspected *Al Shabaab* militants and sympathizers were arrested during a raid on the night of 23 and the morning of 24 August in Mombasa and Kwale. Police also seized a range of weapons and explosives which were reportedly for a planned terror

attack.¹⁷ June recorded the second highest number of arrests where 7 terror suspects were apprehended.¹⁸

February, July and December recorded the least number of arrests with one person being arrested in each month. No arrests were reported in October.

Arrests by counties

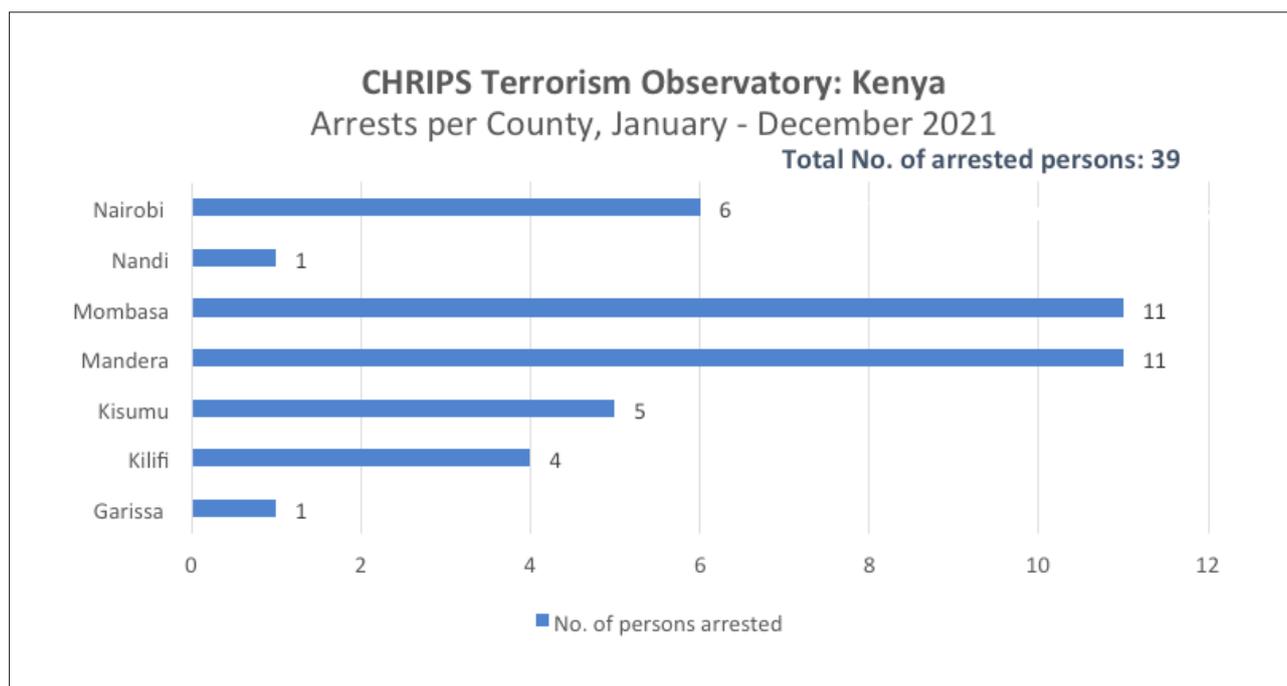


Figure 13: Arrests per county, January – December 2021

Mombasa and Mandera counties recorded the highest number of arrests during the period under review. The least number of arrests were recorded in Garissa County where one terror suspect was arrested in Kulan Trading Centre with materials for making explosives including wires, a battery, a welding metal gadget, assorted electronic devices and assorted mobile phone accessories.¹⁹

Unlike previous years, there were five terror-related arrests recorded in Kisumu County where a total of five Pakistani nationals were arrested on the same day in two separate incidents in May. The suspected terrorists had been under surveillance by the Anti-terror Police Unit (ATPU) before they were arrested in Ahero and Kombewa.²⁰

¹⁷ Cece, S. (2021) "Kenya: Police conduct night raids in Mombasa, Kwale over terror plot", Daily Nation, 26 August, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202108260354.html>

¹⁸ Ocharo, B. (2021) "Kenya: 6 Arrested on Mombasa beach Held 15 Days for Terror Probe", Daily Nation, 28 June, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202106290146.html>

¹⁹ Hussein, F. (2021) "Kenya: Terror Suspect Arrested in Garissa, Explosive-Making Materials Found", Daily Nation, 14 June, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202106150070.html>

²⁰ Barasa, L. (2021) "Police arrest five terror suspects in Kisumu" The Standard, 9 May 2021, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/nyanza/article/2001412361/police-arrest-five-terror-suspects-in-kisumu>

Arrests by Gender

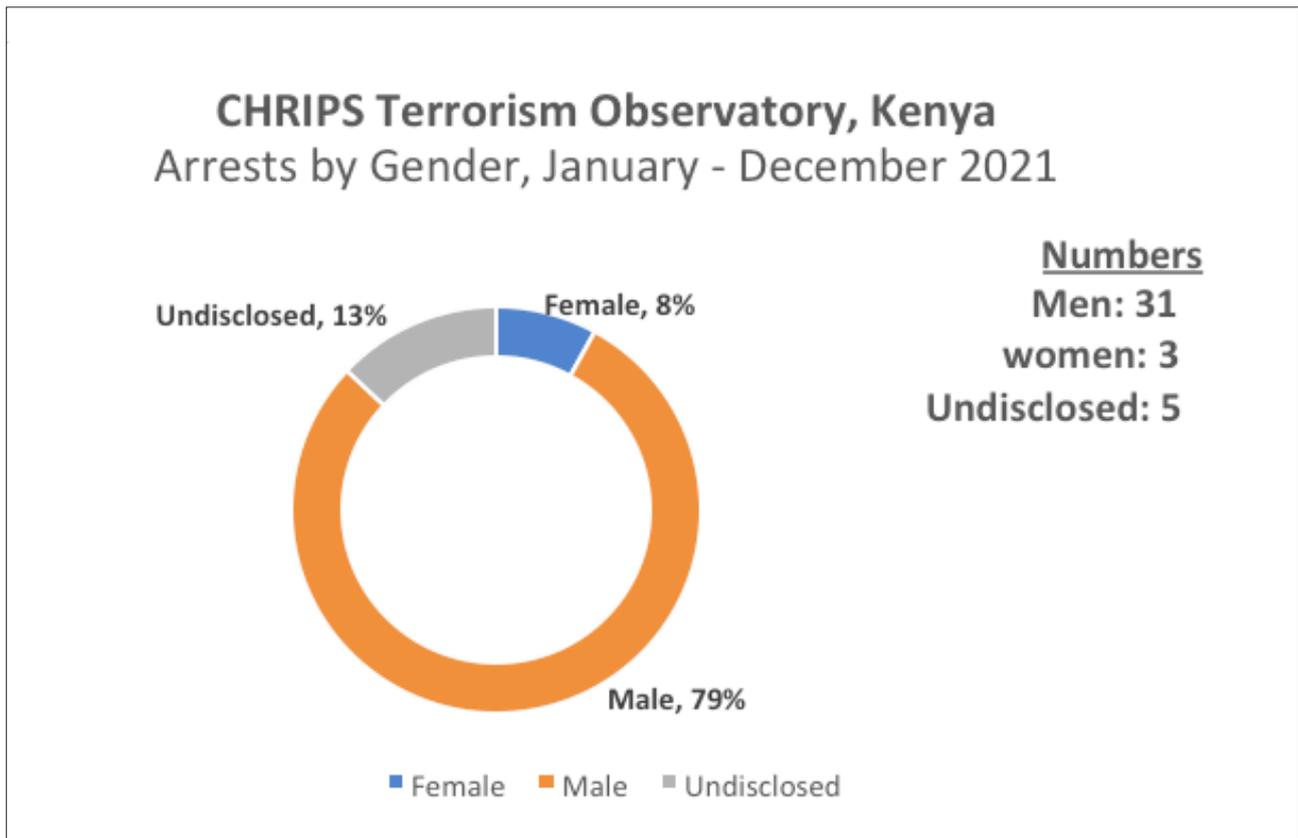


Figure 14: Arrests by gender, January – December 2021

Three women and thirty-one men were arrested in 2021. The three women were arrested in two separate incidents in April and December. Two women were arrested in Nairobi County at their home in April for possession of firearms that were reportedly smuggled into the country for terror activities.²¹ The majority

of the men arrested during the period under review were suspected to have links to terror organisations or involved in financing them. Reports did not disclose nor specify the gender of the remaining five people arrested.

²¹ Omondi, I. (2021) "Mother, daughter arrested with firearms allegedly sneaked into Kenya for terror activities" Citizen Digital, 15 April, <https://citizen.digital/news/mother-daughter-arrested-with-firearms-allegedly-sneaked-into-kenya-for-terror-activities-10143249>

Arrests by Nationality

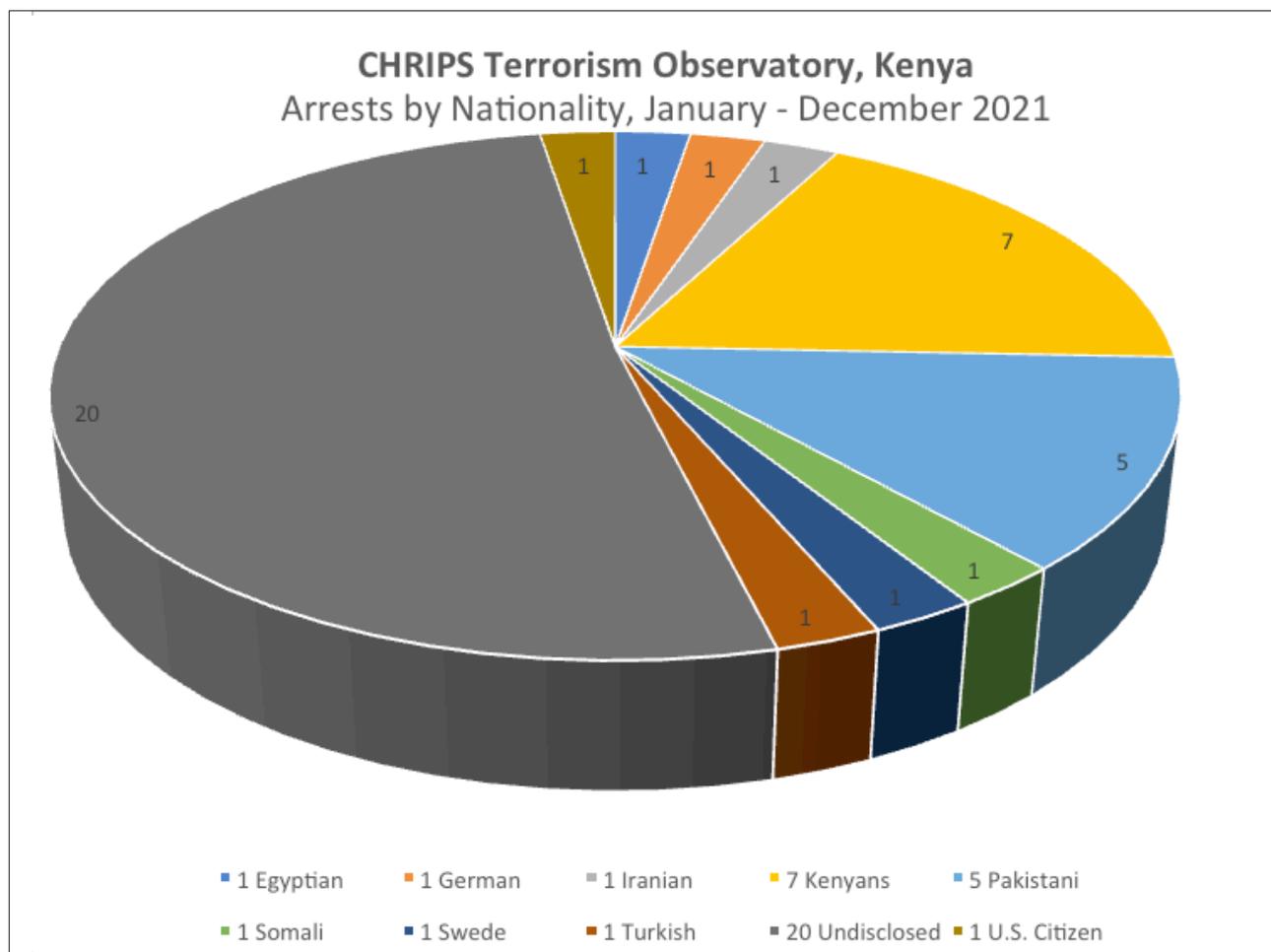


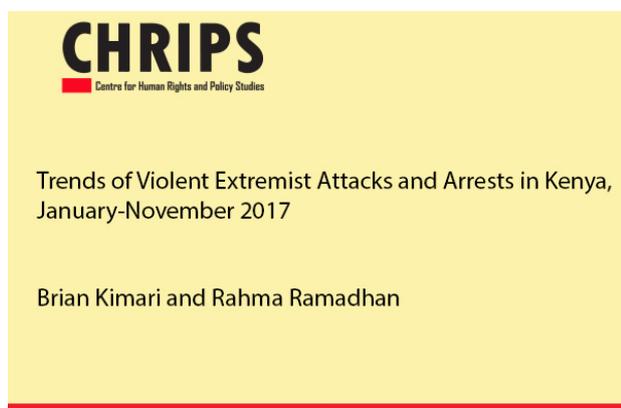
Figure 15: Arrests by nationality, January – December 2021

10 Kenyans, five Pakistani citizens, one Egyptian, one German, one Iranian, one Somali, one Swedish national, one Turkish citizen and one American citizen were reportedly arrested in 2021. Similar to data from the previous year, an additional 20 people were reportedly arrested but their nationalities were not disclosed.

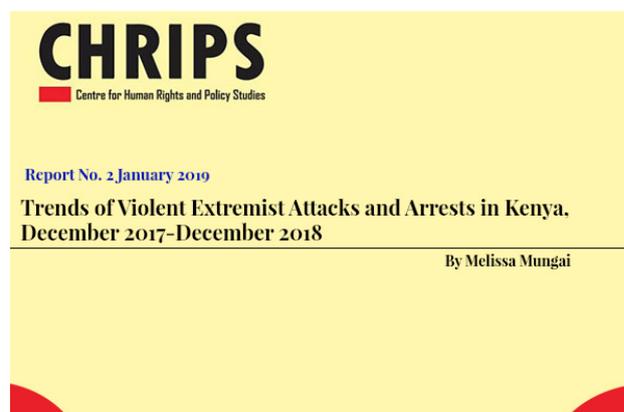
Acknowledgment

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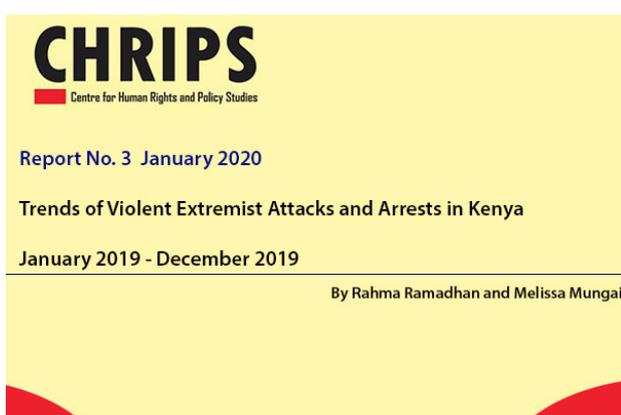
Previous Observatory Reports



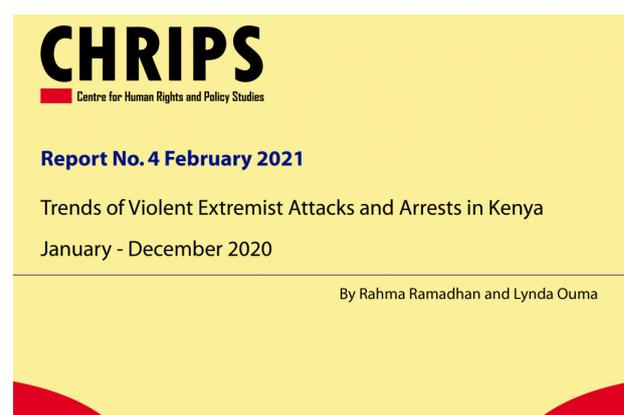
Report No. 1 presents and analyses data, collected from media reports, on terror attacks and arrests between January 1, 2017 and November 30, 2017.



Report No. 2 presents data collected and analysed from media reports on terror attacks between 1 December 2017 and 31 December 2018.



Report No. 3 presents data collected and analysed from 1 January – 31 December 2019.



Report No. 4 presents data collected, disaggregated and analysed from 1 January – 31 December 2020.

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