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Trends of Violent Extremist Attacks and Arrests in Kenya, January-November 2017

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About this report

The data and analysis in this report draws from the terror attacks and Arrests Observatory of the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS). It presents and analyses the latest data, collected from media reports, on terror attacks and arrests between January 1, 2017 and November 30, 2017. Data on terror-related attacks will be regularly updated on the observatory and reports published periodically.

Terror attacks

There were 49 terror attacks within the period under review. The majority of the attacks were attributed to the Al Shabaab. They have not claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, and it is unclear who was

perpetrated them. As illustrated in Figure 1, attacks intensified between May and August with less than five being recorded in every other month. One possible explanation for the increased attacks during this period is that the Al Shabaab sought to ignite further political tensions as the country approached the August 8 general elections.

Some 108 deaths were reported between January and November as resulting from terror attacks. While Al Shabaab have in the past conducted large-scale attacks causing many deaths in a single incident, attacks during the period under review have been on a smaller scale. The highest number of fatalities reported from a single incident was nine, resulting from the Al Shabaab beheading civilians in Lamu on July 7, 2018.[1] This is a contrast from the September 2013 attack on Nairobi's
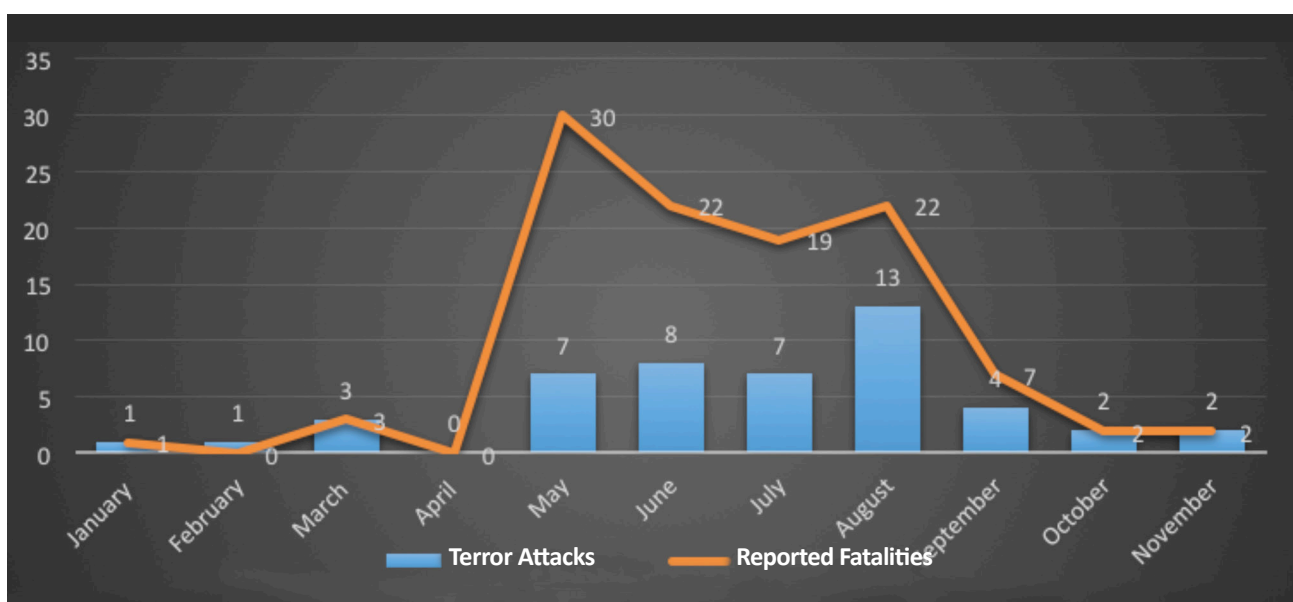

Figure 1: Number of terror attacks, Jan-Nov 2017

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[1] Ombati, C. (2017) 'Al-Shabaab behead nine Kenyans in Lamu attack', Standard Media 8 July, https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001246629/al-shabaab-behead-nine-kenyans-in-lamu-attack(accessed on 18 October 2017)

Westgate Mall which left 67 people dead, and the April 2015 Garissa University attack which claimed 147 lives.
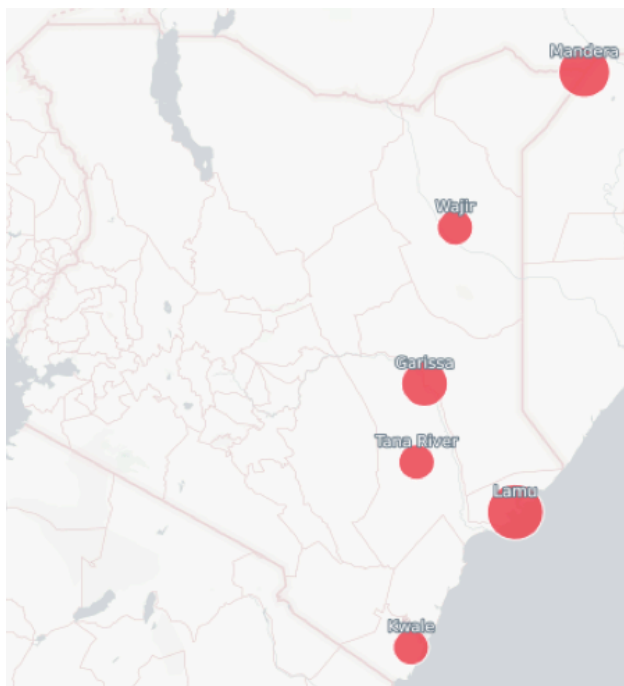
Location of attacks

Figure 2: Distribution and intensity of terror attacks in Kenya

Figure 3: Number of attacks by County

As shown in Figure 2, terrorism attacks were concentrated in counties in the coast and north-eastern parts of Kenya. All the 49 attacks took place in the six counties - Lamu, Kwale, Tana River, Mandera, Garissa, and Wajir. The bulk of them were in Lamu and Mandera, which both experienced close to 20 attacks within the 11 months under review.

Despite the measures taken to secure the country, Al Shabaab has been resilient and managed to carry out several small-scale attacks ultimately resulting in several fatalities with the highest death toll being in Lamu where 58 people were killed in 19 attacks followed by Mandera and Garissa where 22 people were killed in each county over 17 attacks and eight attacks, respectively.
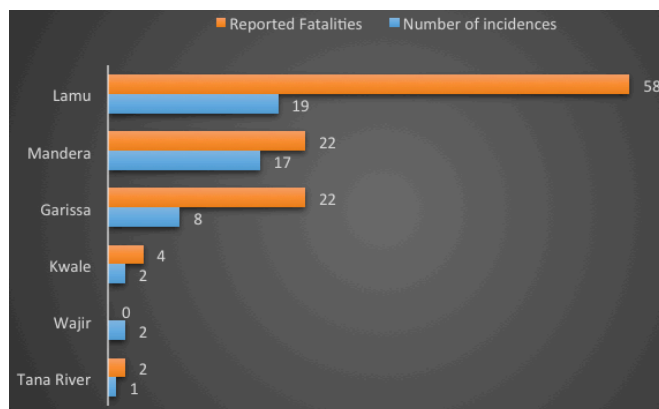
Various arguments have been put forward to explain the concentration of attacks in these regions including their proximity to the porous Somali border which has allowed militants to cross in and out of Kenya and conduct attacks without detection.[2] It has also been argued that the threat is not external but Al Shabaab have recruited Kenyans to carry out the attacks locally. Jaysh Ayman, the military wing of the Al Shabaab responsible for external operations, is said to be one of the groups operating along the Kenyan Coast and the Kenya-Somali border.[3]

Reports in 2017 also suggested that the attacks may be concentrated in the coastal and north-eastern areas owing to the Al Shabaab's ability to secure support and protection from some of the locals.[4] Indeed, the National Assembly Joint Committee on the Inquiry into the Westgate Terrorist Attack and other terror attacks in Mandera and Kilifi noted in its report that "Certain segments of Kenya's Muslim youth are becoming more and more at a risk of radicalization and recruitment into extremist groups for various reasons…because it is not Somali nationals behind most of the terrorist incidents outside Somalia's borders but Kenyan nationals."[5]

Some have noted that ability of the Al Shabaab to carry out attacks and later retreat back into the dense Boni Forest undetected[6] points to familiarity of the militants with the terrain. In addition, some of attackers are said to have called residents by name and spoke Swahili, Somali and other Kenyan dialects.[7]

[2]Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (2016) 'Al Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat', IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP) and Sahan Foundation; Al Jazeera (2015) 'Kenya's Enemy Within - Featured Documentary; *Al Jazeera* 29 November , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mIIbXBa30A(Accessed on 16 October 2017)

[3]Bryden, M. (2015) 'The Decline and Fall of Al-Shabaab? Think Again', Sahan Report: 8, http://sahan.global/stories/decline-fall-al-shabaab-think/ (Accessed on 16 October 2016); IGAD 2016: 24

[4]Otsialo, M. (2017) 'One killed as politician's convoy is attacked in Mandera' *Daily Nation*, 6 June, http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/One-killed-in-Mandera-shooting/1183298-3958246-cqxeo0z/index.html(Accessed on 16 October 2016); Mukindia, F. (2017) 'Shabaab uses Kenyans to carry out terror attacks', *Daily Nation*, 4 July,http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Enemy-within--cited-in-series-of-terror-attacks/1056-3954598-4v2ocw/index.html(Accessed on 16 October 2016)

[5]Government of Kenya (2013) *Report of the Joint Committee on Administration and National Security; and Defence and Foreign Relations on the Inquiry into the Westgate Terrorist Attack and Other Terror Attacks in Mandera in North Eastern and Kilifi in the Coastal Region, December 2013*, Nairobi: Government Printers: 16

[6]Praxides C (2017) "Leave Boni Forest or be bombed alongside al Shabaab, Lamu security chiefs tell locals," *The Star*20 October, https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2017/08/20/leave-boni-forest-or-be-bombed-alongside-al-shabaab-lamu-security_c1619972(Accessed on 16 October 2016)

[7]Nyagah, T., Mwangi, J. and Attree, L. (2017) 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: the case of Lamu', Saferworld, :3, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58921b4b6b8f5bd75e20af7e/t/5952c754b3db2b9ff-2c5e7f9/1498597210624/inside-v5-kenyas-war-on-terror-pdf-v5.pdf(Accessed on 22 November 2017); Bocha, G. (2017) "How Boni Forest became the warzone it is today," The East African19 July, http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Boni-Forest-the-inside-story/2558-4022766-4bosf7/index.html(Accessed on 16 October 2016)

Al Shabaab often exploits the history of marginalisation of Muslim and Somali populations in these regions to gain support, radicalise and recruit people based on the narrative that they will liberate Muslim population from harassment of the Kenyan government. After the Mpeketoni attacks in 2014 for instance, Al Shabaab posted a video titled "Mpeketoni: Reclaiming back Muslim Lands under Kenyan Occupation" featuring Muslim clerics urging people to join the group to liberate Muslims and take back land belonging to them.[9] These reflect land grievances in the area, which have been a point of contestation since the 1960s. The prospects of making money also adds to the allure of joining terror groups in these areas which are affected by widespread poverty and underdevelopment.[10] Al Shabaab has exploited these grievances to recruit young people into its ranks and justify its attacks.[11]

Targets

The Observatory also disaggregates terror attacks by the persons or facilities targeted. This covers attacks on security officials, private citizens and property, infrastructure and public facilities, telecommunication facilities, businesses, education institutions, and religious institutions.[12]
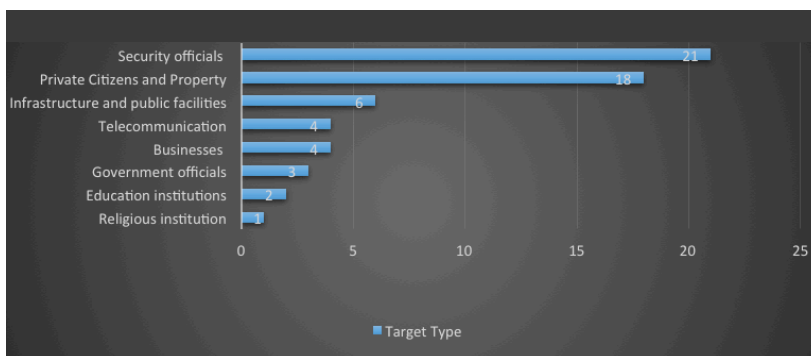

Figure 4: Distribution of terror attacks by target type

Security officials were the major target of terror attacks with 21 attacks compared to 18 attacks targeting civilians. While more attacks were directed at security officials, there were more civilian casualties. Civilian casualties also resulted from some of the attacks primarily targeted at security officials. On October 10, 2017 for instance, two staff of Technical University Mombasa inside a police vehicle were

killed in Kwale when militants attacked the vehicle. In addition, four pupils were killed in a Lamu attack on June 27, 2017 following an attack on a police lorry carrying 19 Administration Police officers and

15 civilians, most of them children who had hiked a lift.

A number of attacks were also targeted government officials. The most notable of these was July 13, 2017 attack on Public Works Principal Secretary Mariam El Maawy, which resulted in her death and those of her nephew, driver and bodyguard. In May 2017 Al-Shabaab also raided a chief's homestead in Omar Jilliow at night and shot him dead. Three Tana River County officials were also shot to death in Lamu and their bodies burnt.

There have also been numerous attacks on telecommunication infrastructure. Four communication masts were destroyed in Mandera (2), Lamu and Garissa. This impairs capacity of security officials to respond to attacks since alerts will be delayed and communication/coordination between them will be affected.

Infrastructure and public facilities were also targeted, including the burning of a social/meeting hall in Mandera and destruction of one electricity pole in Gamba, Lamu. Public transportation was also affected following various Al Shabaab attacks. Three civilians were killed on August 2, 2017 in Witu, Lamu County aboard a bus heading from Malindi to Kipini. However, many of the attacks involving public transportation were targeted at security officials escorting them. In an ambush on November 28, 2017, Al Shabaab attacked security officialsescorting a passenger bus from Lamu to Mombasa killing two administrative police officers. The

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[8]Mukinda, F. (2017) "Shabaab uses Kenyans to carry out terror attacks," *Daily Nation*, 4 June, http://www.nation.co.ke/news/-Enemy-within--cited-in-series-of-terror-attacks/1056-3954598-4v2ocw/index.html(Accessed on 30November 2016)

[9]Bryden 2015: 8

[10]ICG 2016: 11
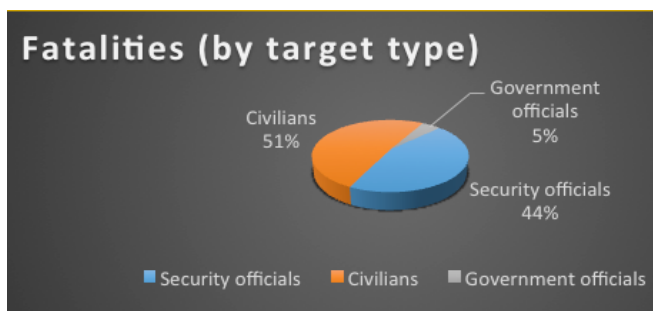
[11]Ibid

[12]A single attack can have multiple targets

Figure 5: Percentage distribution of fatalities (by target type)

Figure 6: Distribution of weapons used in terror attacks, and fatalities caused

militants spared the civilians and instead distributed leaflets written "We won't retreat. Our target is the government".[13]

Businesses were attacked including a guest house and bank in Mandera on January 23, 2017 and two raids on local dispensaries in Lamu where Al Shabaab militants reportedly stole drugs. There have also been two attacks on educational institutions. In January 2 teachers from a school located in Hagadera camp, Dadaab were kidnapped by suspected Al Shabaab militants. They also burnt down a classroom in Lamu on July 15, 2017. The only incident involving a religious institution was on November 26, 2017 when unknown militants attempted to throw an explosive from a vehicle at a church in Mandera, but it instead landed on the perimeter wall and exploded outside.

Weapons used

Four types of weapons were used in execution of terror attacks between January and November. In some attacks, more than one weapon was used. These were firearms, explosive devices, incendiary devices, and bladed weapons such as knives and machetes.

There were more firearms used in than any other weapon. Firearms were employed in 26 attacks in the country accounting for 48 percent of all attacks and resulting in 41 deaths. This is unsurprising considering the extensive use of firearms by different terrorist groups over the years. Firearms remain attractive weapons to terrorists owing to their availability, affordability, and the fact that they are easily operated.

Use of explosives came in second with media reporting 19 different attacks across the country. The explosives used have included improvised explosive devices (IEDs), landmines, hand and rocket-propelled grenades, and
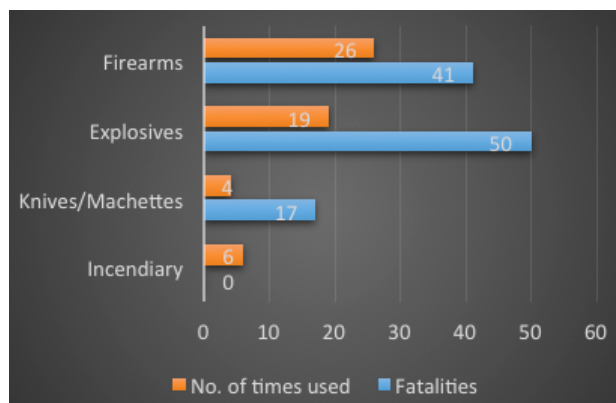
other unspecified explosive devices. The use of IEDs is attractive owing to the high impact generated as compared to other weapons. While firearm use was more frequent, explosives have resulted 50 deaths, compared to 41 deaths caused by firearms.

By using explosives Al Shabaab can avoid direct contact/ combat with security officials thereby diminishing the number of casualties on their side. Of the 50 people killed by explosives, 31 were security officials. Firearms killed an equal number of civilians and security officials with 18 deaths being recorded for both catregories. Five government officials were also killed by firearms in separate attacks.
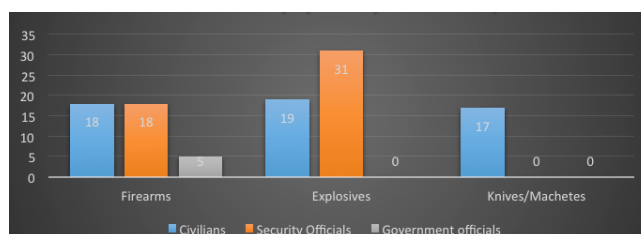

Figure 7: Distribution of fatalities by target type and weapons used

Knives and machetes have been used in four different occasions where Al Shabaab carried out beheadings in Lamu. The beheadings targeted civilians, specifically non-Muslim men in remote villages.[14] Despite being the most infrequent mode of attack in the year, beheadings constitute a lethal threat with 17 fatalities being recorded in only four attacks.

Incendiary devices were used at least six times between January 2017 and November 2017. However, there were no fatalities recorded directly resulting from the use of incendiary devices. Their use was directed at

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[13]Ahmed, M. and Kazungu, K. (2017) 'Two APs killed in attack by suspected Shabaab militants', *Daily Nation* 28 November, http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/lamu/APs-die-Shabaab-attack-Lamu/3444912-4206804-1qqctiz/index.html (Accessed on 04 December 2017).

[14]World Watch Monitor (2017) "Kenyan Christians killed for refusing to recite Islamic Shahada," *World Watch Monitor,* 22 August,https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/08/kenyan-christians-killed-refusing-recite-islamic-shahada/(Accessed on 30 November 2016)

destruction of property and infrastructure including a classroom in Lamu, and communication masts in Mandera and Garissa among other attacks. Al Shabaab also burnt bodies and vehicles of people who they had attacked using other weapons in the same incident. In one instance, a charred vehicle and the burnt remains of Tana River County officials were recovered bearing gunshot wounds from an Al Shabaab attack.

Terror-related arrests

During the period January 2017 to November 2017, 179 people were arrested by security officials for terrorism-related offences as recorded from media reports.

Most of the arrests took place in June 2017 with the other months being much lower. This is attributable to a security sweep conducted in June 2017 in which 88 people were reportedly arrested in one incident. In September 2017, 21 more people were arrested in one swoop in Malindi, for allegedly indoctrinating children with extreme religious ideology.[15]

Other arrests were for various offences related to terrorism including direct involvement in preparing, financing, assisting, attempting and executing attacks; as well as membership in terror groups. On January 7, 2017, for instance, two people were arrested on suspicion that they were planning terror attacks on churches and other sites in Nairobi. Others arrested for preparation and attempting attacks were found in possession of bomb-making material as well as other weapons as was the case in an arrest on April 15, 2017 in Mandera and two others arrested on August 25, 2017 in Mombasa. Some were also arrested on suspected involvement in execution of past attacks including two men arrested as was the case with a May 25, 2017 implicated in a Garissa attack in the same month.

Most of the arrests recorded by the Observatory were those of persons accused of radicalizing and recruiting Kenyans into terrorism. On June 17, 2017, police apprehended four suspects in Nairobi and Voi Town on suspicion that they recruited several minors aged 16 and 17 into an unknown terrorist organisation.

Figure 8: Number of terror-related arrests, Jan-Nov 2017

While majority of suspects were linked to Al Shabaab, others were also suspected to have ties to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On March 27, 2017, for instance, three people arrested for recruitment in Malindi were affiliated to ISIS. In addition, 10 arrested suspects were alleged to have been travelling to Somalia to join Al Shabaab. On the other hand, five suspects were arrested on returning from Syria and Libya. This includes three Kenyan women arrested in Egypt on June 5, 2017 who confessed that they were lured into Libya on promises of lucrative jobs once they arrive but ended up being held captive by ISIS operatives.

137 Kenyans were reported in the media to have been arrested in the 11 months under review, accounting for 76 percent of the total. This includes five who were arrested in Somalia and Egypt and deported to Kenya for terrorism-related offences. The two suspects arrested in Somalia were alleged to have been involved in a series of IED attacks in the north-eastern part of the country, which claimed 17 police officers.

Thirty-five foreigners were arrested for terror-related activities in the year. While not all their nationalities were known, majority of them were African nationals from Somalia, Tanzania, Burundi, and Malawi, with the exception of one U.S citizen arrested in Meru for recruitment of youth into terror groups. Somali nationals were the most foreigners arrested for terror related offences. Six suspects from Tanzania and Burundi were arrested in Isiolo on suspicion that they were travelling to Somalia to join a terrorist group. A single Malawian citizen was arrested in Mombasa amid allegations that he was collecting photographs and creating sketches of the Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway terminus for terrorism purposes.

[15]Lwanga, C. (2017) 'Cleric in extreme teachings case detained', *Daily Nation*, 2 October,http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Cleric-in-extreme-teachings-case-still-detained/1056-4121862-15m5hyc/index.html(Accessed on 30 November 2016)

Some 52 men and 13 women were arrested for terrorism- related offences in the period under review. However, the gender of majority of 114 arrested suspects was unintelligible, especially resulting from security sweeps where their details, including name and gender, were not disclosed to the public. Available data, however, shows that men were arrested for suspected involvement in all the various terrorism-related offences. Women, on the other hand were arrested only on suspicion of membership in a terror group, terrorism financing, human trafficking and hosting terrorists, radicalization, and returning from Syria and Libya where they had allegedly joined ISIS.

Figure 10: Percentage distribution of arrested suspects by gender

Figure 9: Percentage distribution of arrested suspects by nationality
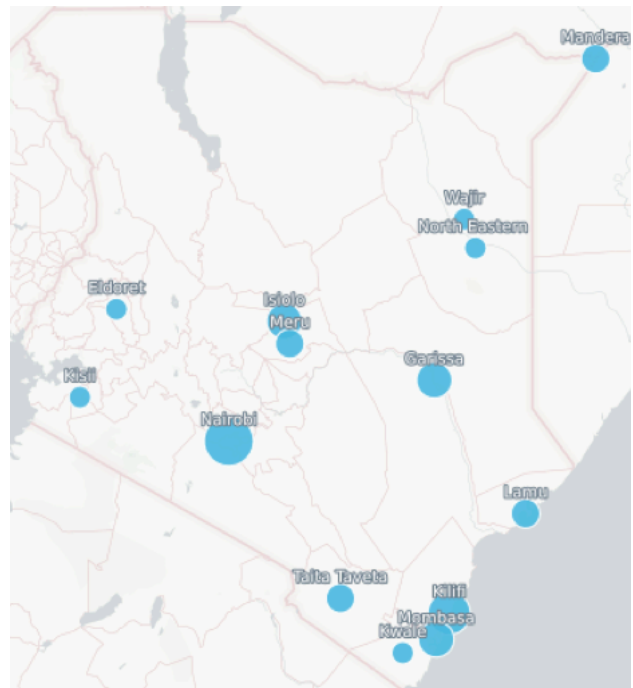
Location of arrests

Figure 11: Distribution and intensity of terror-related arrests in Kenya

As displayed in the map above, the terrorism-related arrests took place in almost every part of the country. This is in contrast to the fact that terror attacks were only concentrated in counties located at the coast and north-eastern.
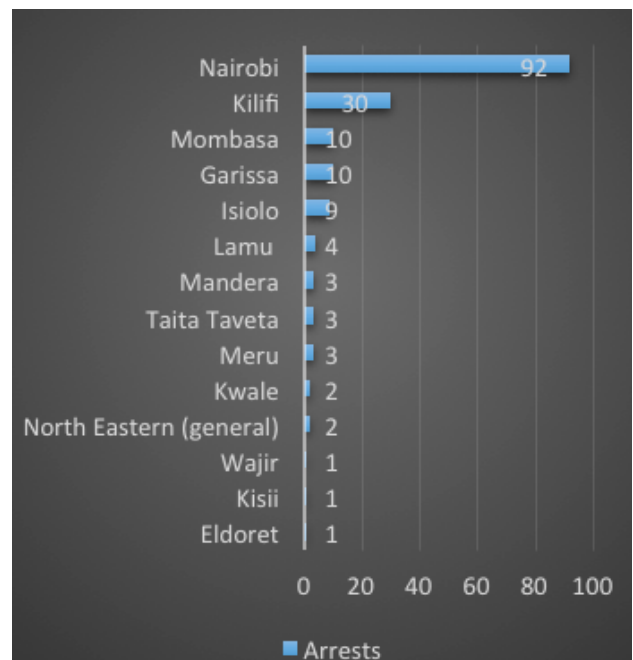

Figure 12: Number of terror-related arrests per county

Nairobi recorded the highest number of arrests. This owes a security sweep in Nairobi's Eastleigh area where 88 people were reportedly arrested. Arrests in Eastleigh, as well as other counties at the coast and north-eastern, are unsurprising owing to the high Muslim and Somali populations, which tend to be unfairly profiled by counterterrorism officials.
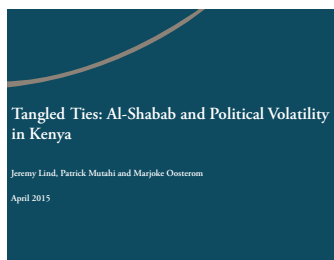
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Al Jazeera (2015) 'Kenya's Enemy Within - Featured Documentary ', Al Jazeera 29 November,https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mIIbXBa30A (Accessed on 16 October 2017)

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Mukinda, F. (2017) "Kenyans lured to Libya by IS are back," *Daily Nation*, 6 October: 11.

Mukindia, F. (2017) 'Shabaab uses Kenyans to carry out terror attacks', *Daily Nation*, 4 July, http://www.nation.co.ke/news/-Enemy-within--cited-in-series-of-terror-attacks/1056-3954598-4v2ocw/index.html(Accessed on 16 October 2016).

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Ombati, C. (2017) 'Al-Shabaab behead nine Kenyans in Lamu attack', *Standard Media* 8 July, https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001246629/al-shabaab-behead-nine-kenyans-in-lamu-attack(accessed on 18 October 2017).

Ombati, C. (2017) 'She was also arrested in 2014 alongside her two brothers Ibrahim Kaluime, Ali Dzivo, Standard Media, 28 November, https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001261497/she-was-also-arrested-in-2014-alongside-her-two-brothers-ibrahim-kaluime-ali-dzivo (Accessed on 3 December 2017).

Otsialo, M. (2017) 'One killed as politician's convoy is attacked in Mandera' *Daily Nation*, 6 June, http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/One-killed-in-Mandera-shooting/1183298-3958246-cqxeo0z/index.html(Accessed on 16 October 2016).

World Watch Monitor (2017) "Kenyan Christians killed for refusing to recite Islamic Shahada," *World Watch Monitor,* 22 August,https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/08/kenyan-christians-killed-refusing-recite-islamic-shahada/(Accessed on 30 November 2016).
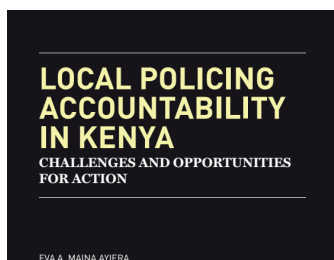
Acknowledgements

PUBLICATIONS

Tangled Ties: Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya (CHRIPS & IDS Sussex, 2015).
This study argues Al-Shabaab remains one of the greatest threats to regional stability and security. Worsening violent insecurity in Kenya suggests that the more important impact of the group has been to simply unmask the country's deep, structural divisions.

Local Policing Accountability in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities for Action (CHRIPS, 2015).
This study examines police accountability structures and needs at the local community level, where the scrutiny of oversight institutions, civil society organizations and the media is often low. It argues that the lack of confidence in the police as the key hindrances to local policing accountability.
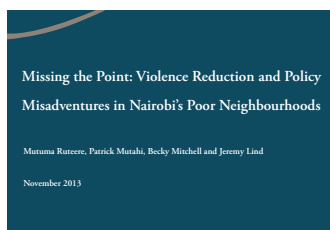
Effectiveness of Community-Led Security Mechanisms in Urban Eastern Africa: A Research Agenda (CHRIPS, 2015).
This study discusses the methodology for CHRIPS' three-year research project on community-led security initiatives in low income urban neighbourhoods in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.
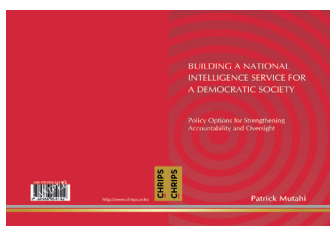
Securing the Counties: Options for Security after Devolution in Kenya (CHRIPS, 2014).
This study argues that counties are central not only to development but also the implementation of security solutions. Considerable opportunities and capacities for improving security exist at the county level.
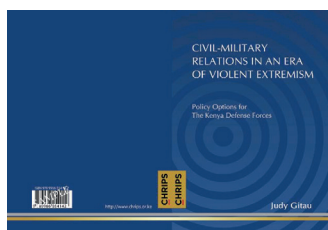
Missing the Point: Violence Reduction and Policy Misadventures in Nairobi's Poor Neighbourhoods (CHRIPS & IDS Sussex, 2014).
The study finds that the failure of the state to provide for basic needs in health, education and social care, as well as a lack of effective policing, has created an opening that criminal organizations and gangs have exploited.

Building a National Intelligence Service for a Democratic Society: Policy Options for Strengthening Accountability and Oversight (CHRIPS, 2016).
This study is a critical examination of the effectiveness of the accountability of the intelligence services in Kenya. In tandem with the central tenet of the constitution that all national security organs remain subordinate to civilian authority, the study argues that democratic accountability would ensure proper impetus for reforming the National Intelligence Services.

Civil-Military Relations in an Era of Violent Extremism: Policy Options for The Kenya Defence Forces (CHRIPS, 2016).
This study examines the civilian oversight structures over the Kenya Defence forces, in the context of military engagement in countering terrorism and violent extremism in Kenya. The study argues that the threat of terrorism requires a multi-pronged approach in developing an effective national security strategy.

Where is the Money? Donor Funding for Conflict and Violence Prevention in Eastern Africa (CHRIPS, 2017)
This study demonstrates that donors have a variety of security and commercial interests in the region, and these are not always neatly separable from conflict and security priorities

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