

# **KENYA**

## **Timeline**

1886

The European colonial powers divide Africa between themselves at the Berlin Conference, beginning the scramble for Africa. Germany and Britain are dominant in East Africa. The Sultan of Oman is granted a strip on the coastline.

1895

British East African Protectorate formed.

1898

The construction of a railway from Mombasa to Lake Victoria progresses fast, but is delayed in Tsavo. Two lions kill 135 Indian and African railway workers. Lt. Col. J.H. Patterson kills the lions after hunting them for nine months.

Construction of the Kenyan railway.

1899

The city of Nairobi is founded.

1901

The railway from Mombasa to Kisumu is completed, spanning 965 km. European and Indian settlers arrive in great numbers in East Africa. White settlers control the colony and take the most fertile land while the African inhabitants are forced into 'native reserves'. In the following years several local uprisings are suppressed by British soldiers.

1902

The border between Kenya and Uganda is established, making Kisumu and the area around Lake Victoria part of Kenya.

1905

British settlers begin their first experiments growing coffee in Kenya.

1907

The British colonial administration moves from Mombasa to Nairobi.

1910

Nairobi becomes the official capital of Kenya.

1914

World War I begins to affect Africa. 47,000 Kenyan Africans volunteer for service.

1915

The British settlers take 5,186 hectares from the Africans, and the Crown Lands Ordinance Act further reduces native land rights. All African adult males are required to carry identification papers when leaving the reserves.

1918

World War I ends and an influx of European settlers, many of whom are ex-soldiers, exacerbates the crisis surrounding land ownership in Kenya.

1921

The East African Protectorate becomes the crown colony of Kenya, administered by a British governor. The East African Association (EAA), one of the first organisations to campaign for African rights in the region, is formed by Harry Thuku, and, among others, Jomo Kenyatta.

1922

Africans educated at the Missions begin protesting against British policies. The EAA is banned and Thuku arrested.

1923

The first tea plantation is founded in Kenya. A law ensures that only the European settlers profit from the export of tea and coffee.

1924

The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) is formed to continue the work of the EAA.

1939

Labour unions begin to organise in the colony and many go on strike in Mombasa. The outbreak of the Second World War results in the recruitment of around 100,000 Kenyans to fight against the Italians in East Africa.

1940

The KCA is banned.

1942

The Kenyan African Union (KAU) is formed to push for independence. This is the first African appointment to the legislative council.

1947

Jomo Kenyatta becomes leader of KAU.

1952

A political Kikuyu grouping calling themselves the Mau Mau begins to mount violent attacks against white settlers. Mau Mau guerrillas organize themselves as the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KFLA). As the rebellion continues Britain declares a state of emergency in Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta, mistakenly regarded as the leader of the Mau Mau, is jailed and the KAU is banned.

February 6, 1952 – The future queen of England, Elizabeth, is visiting Kenya when her father, King George VI, dies of cancer. She returns to England as Queen Elizabeth II.

1953-55

Mau Mau warriors kill Africans loyal to the British and target some Europeans. Around 50,000 British soldiers are sent to suppress the rebellion, using bombers to attack Mau Mau strongholds. The government begins a policy of transporting Kikuyu to reserves and imprisons suspected Mau Mau supporters in concentration camps, where human rights abuse and torture are commonplace.

1956

The leader of KLF, general Dedan Kimathi, is captured by British troops with assistance from a loyal Kikuyu group. Without effective leadership, the Mau Mau is defeated. Government estimates claim that 11,503 Mau Mau have been killed – although the number was likely much higher – in comparison to 30 Europeans. About 100,000 African people are imprisoned.

1957

Kimathi is executed. Ghana becomes the first African colony to gain independence. An official British government analysis estimates that Britain spends £51 million on its colonies every year.

1958

Hayes and Tebbutt launch the weekly Taifa ('Nation') with a commitment to supporting independence 'in a reasoned way'. Its first headline was a quote from a Tom Mboya speech at a political meeting in Kaloleni: 'When shall we see freedom?' The paper is soon sold to the Nation Media Group, which changes the title to Nation.

1959

Kenyatta is transferred from prison to house arrest. The formation of political parties is no longer illegal and African politicians are invited to attend negotiations in London. The Hola Camp massacre sees 11 Mau Mau prisoners die of ill-treatment.

1960

The state of emergency is lifted and talks are held at Lancaster House in London to discuss Kenyan independence. Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod acknowledges the inevitability of Kenyan independence and the British government starts preparing the country for a transition to independence.

May – the KAU is renamed as the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party, formed by Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga. Kenyatta is elected president in absentia.

June – Politicians fearful of Kikuyu-Luo domination form Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU), which favours a federalist government. Ronald Ngala becomes president, Masinde Muliro VP and Daniel arap Moi chairman.

October – First issue of the Daily Nation hits the streets and becomes the first national daily newspaper in Kenya.

1961

February – KANU wins the first general election under the new constitutional dispensation, taking 16 seats in the 53-member Legco to KADU's ten, but refuses to form a government until Kenyatta is released. KADU forms a coalition government with the white-led New Kenya Party.

March – Kenyatta is moved from restriction in Lodwar to a halfway house at Maralal, where the press sees him for the first time in nine years. Five months later he is released and returns to his Gatundu home. He becomes leader of the Kenya African National Union (KANU).

1963

Kenya gains independence, with Kenyatta as prime minister. Prince Philip accepts an invitation to preside over the lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the Kenyan flag at a ceremony on 12 December 1963, attended by thousands of celebrating Kenyans.

1964

The Republic of Kenya is formed with Kenyatta as president and Oginga Odinga as vice president. The party KADU dissolves and integrates with KANU, leaving the government without official opposition and effectively creating a one-party state. Fearing what will happen after independence, as many as 10,000 whites leave the country.

1965

February 24 – The death of Goan socialist Pinto comes as the first of several subsequent political assassinations, including Tom Mboya, J.M. Kariuku and Robert Ouko.

1966

Odinga, a Luo, leaves the Kikuyu-dominated KANU after an ideological split, to form the rival Kenya People's Union (KPU). He is arrested several times over the next few years. The Preservation of Public Security Bill of 1966 provides for detention without trial and other special measures under emergency powers granted to the President to combat threats to national security.

1969

The assassination of government minister Tom Mboya, a Luo, by a Kikuyu, sparks ethnic unrest. KPU is banned and Odinga arrested. KANU becomes the only political party to contest elections as conflicts between ethnic groups continue.

1974

Kenyatta re-elected as president. Kiswahili becomes the official language in parliament.

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## **British colonization of Kenya**

The large-scale involvement of Britain in Kenya was part of the scramble for Africa, a period of aggressive European imperial expansion that began at the end of the 19th century and lasted until the start of the First World War. Driven by a desire for imperial prestige and resources, European

nations rushed to colonise as much African territory as possible. Agreements over the regions claimed by the Europeans were negotiated in the 1884-5 Berlin Conference, and the British were granted control over much of the East African coast, forming the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895 and eventually naming the area as an official colony in 1905. From around 1890 the British began to move inland, hoping to gain access to the fertile highlands and provide greater security for Uganda, which had also been claimed as a British colony. In order to facilitate this, a railway line from Mombasa to Kisumu was built using Indian workers, and British forces were sent to suppress the ethnic groups living in the central highlands. These groups included the Maasai, a Nilote people, and the Kikuyu and Kamba, both Bantu-speaking groups. Whilst the Maasai largely avoided military confrontation with the British, the Kamba and particularly the Kikuyu were targeted by colonial forces and local collaborators.<sup>[viii]</sup> This campaign of 'pacification', combined with famine and disease that swept the region during this period, resulted in significant loss of life and property amongst the indigenous people. Furthermore, an influx of European settlers a few years later in 1903 precipitated a policy of land reallocation that allowed the expropriation of fertile land belonging to Africans. This process essentially transformed the indigenous people into an agricultural proletariat, either driven from their own land and moved to reserves controlled by the British, or forced to labour for those settlers who had claimed the area. This period of colonial oppression and land reallocation left a lasting impression on those it targeted. The Kikuyu in particular were left harbouring deep grievances that would resurface half a century later during the Mau Mau rebellion.

The colonial process instigated by the British was interrupted by the advent of the First World War. The conflict in Europe affected Kenya, with many people from the local population drafted to assist British troops in overcoming German resistance in Tanzania. Official British estimates claim that almost 24 000 Africans from the region died during this campaign, although others argue that the toll was much higher. Kenyans were also impacted upon by the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915, an order that swept away most remaining native land rights and rendered the indigenous people into landless squatters, a situation aggravated by the influx of European ex-soldiers after the conclusion of the war in 1918. Kenya's role in the Second World War had a similar effect. 47 000 African Kenyans volunteered to fight in the British war effort, which proved decisive in defeating the Italian forces in Ethiopia, and many other Kenyans aided the campaign by raising crops for the British. Despite the assistance provided by the indigenous Kenyan people, the British made few concessions to the popular demands for land justice and representation.

The continued mistreatment of Kenyans by colonial oppressors stirred Kenyans to form a movement calling for greater political recognition of African rights. The first significant organisation that pursued this aim was the **East African Association (EAA)**, which was formed in 1921 by Harry Thuka and, among others, Jomo Kenyatta – the future President of an independent Kenya. The EAA was intended to be an organisation inclusive of all ethnic groups, although its members were predominantly Kikuyu, and as its name suggests, it was hoped that the EAA could represent all the people of East Africa, rather than just those in Kenya. The colonial administration opposed the organisation from its inception, and Thuka was arrested in 1922 and the EAA banned. A similar organisation, the Kenyan African Union (KAU), was formed in 1942. This organisation focused predominately on demanding land access from White settlers and quickly gained membership, including Kenyatta, who was appointed its leader in 1947. These organisations were instrumental in

politicising the disenfranchised Kenyan people, and the KAU played a key role during the Mau Mau uprising just a few years later.

### **Mau Mau Uprising**

The Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule, although militarily unsuccessful, was a defining episode in the Kenyan struggle for independence. Colonial domination of Kenya had existed for centuries, pursued by both the Portuguese and Omani Arabs before the British arrived, but the gradual push for decolonisation that occurred throughout Africa during the 20th century gave confidence to the movement to call for an independent Kenya. The origins of the Mau Mau uprising began with a general discontentment with the conditions imposed by the British colonial regime. Hundreds of thousands of Kenyans lived in poor conditions in the slums around Nairobi, with few opportunities for employment, little chance of social or legal justice, and suffering from the effects of economic inflation raising the price of basic commodities.[xiv] In comparison, most of the White Europeans and many of the Indians who had settled in Nairobi enjoyed a conspicuous level of wealth, and frequently treated indigenous Africans with disrespect. A similar situation arose in rural areas, where the fertile land was overwhelmingly owned by Europeans. This state of affairs exacerbated pre-existing grievances stemming from earlier British actions in subjugating the local population and reallocating their valuable land to European settlers.

The Mau Mau was a loose grouping of predominantly Kikuyu Kenyans, who had been reduced to the status of squatters on their own land. Unhappy with their poor political progress in pursuing rights for Africans while under continuing pressure from the government and European settlers, they decided to engage in armed resistance against British rule. One of the key figures in the Mau Mau movement was Dedan Kimathi, a former member of the KAU. In 1952 Mau Mau supporters began a campaign of violence against both Europeans and the Africans who co-operated with them. The British responded by ordering police to indiscriminately detain hundreds of Kikuyu. This action heightened tensions and increased popular support for the Mau Mau. The government responded by declaring a State of Emergency and sending troops to fight the uprising.[xvi] This action was considered tantamount to a declaration of war, and pushed even more disaffected Africans to the Mau Mau cause, many of who fled to the forests to organise guerrilla attacks against the British.[xvii] The response of the colonial government was fierce. Utilising thousands of British troops a nationwide campaign was initiated with the purposes of crushing the threat posed by the Mau Mau. Undertaking a policy of deporting Kikuyu to the reserves, many thousands of Africans were detained and transported away from their homes, whilst others were re-housed in villages under British control. Concentration camps were used to process the Kikuyu suspected of Mau Mau involvement, and abuse and torture were commonplace. Simultaneously, British and loyalist forces moved through the forests, killing anyone suspected of Mau Mau involvement.

Finally, in 1956 Kimathi was captured, effectively ending Mau Mau resistance. Kimathi was put on trial and hanged a year later. The military operations against the rebels resulted in many deaths. The official government figure was 11 503, although due to the nature of the fighting it can be presumed to be significantly higher. In comparison, the Mau Mau was estimated to be responsible for fewer than a hundred white deaths during the period of the uprising.

Despite the military defeat of the Mau Mau, their formation was a clear indication of the extent of popular support for independence within Kenya. This, coupled with Britain's reluctance to continue pursuing colonial ambitions, placed the idea of an independent Kenya firmly on the agenda.

### **Independence**

In 1960 the British government held a conference in London to discuss the constitutional future of Kenya, and for the first time officially recognised the inevitability of independence under African majority rule. The first Kenyan general election with the participation of African parties was held in 1961, with one of the major issues being the release of Jomo Kenyatta, who had been detained in 1952 on the basis of his alleged involvement with the Mau Mau. The Kenyan African National Party (KANU), the successor to the KAU, won a majority of the vote, but refused to form a government until Kenyatta was free. As a result, the country was governed by a coalition established between the Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU) and the White-led New Kenya Party for a year. When Kenyatta was released in 1962, he joined KANU and triumphed in the 1963 elections. He was sworn in as prime minister and declared Kenya to be finally free of British rule. A year later Kenya became a republic, with Kenyatta as the president, and KADU voluntarily dissolved to allow the creation of a strong one-party state. Kenyatta assumed a conciliatory tone towards the European settlers and forbade any retaliation for past acts, whilst also offering an amnesty for crimes committed by Mau Mau fighters during the State of Emergency.

Kenyatta remained President for the rest of his life, and his government managed to maintain a reasonable level of political stability and economic prosperity for Kenya. Whilst generally very popular amongst Kenyans, Kenyatta's rule was characterised by an extremely strong hold on power, which was often used to the benefit of his family and close allies, and there were repeated accusations of his ruthlessness in maintaining this wealth and power.[xxv] Nevertheless, the national mourning after his death in 1978 demonstrated how closely the country associated him with the success of Kenya following independence.

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