



**Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs**



## **Preventing deadlocked or violent elections: lessons from Kenya**

A lunch time discussion organised by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

### Concept Note

Date: 6 December 2017, 12h30 – 14h30

Location: Quaker House, 50 Square Ambiorix, 1000 Bruxelles

Format: Informal roundtable discussion under the Chatham House Rule

A Light lunch will be served from 12h15

### Background

Elections are part of any democratic process and are often associated with political transitions in conflict contexts. However, in a number of countries around the world, and more recently in parts of Africa, elections have led to violence or a political deadlock. For instance, Kenya faced strong election violence in 2007/2008 and clashes were recorded in the context of election re-runs at the end of October 2017. Burundi went to polls in 2015, when President Nkurunziza sought a third mandate, contrary to the Arusha agreement, which led to severe post-elections violence. The crisis is yet to be resolved. In Zimbabwe, previous elections in 2008 and 2013 involved post-election violence and accusation of fraud. Pending questions around the presidential and legislative elections originally scheduled for August 2018 are now multiplying given the rapidly evolving security situation.

Efforts by the international community to prevent election violence have evolved over the last few years. There is broad recognition today that prevention mechanisms need to address root causes of violence. For example, elections often trigger violence related to unresolved issues (historical injustices), such as land distribution or natural resources. Elections are symbolic of democratic transitions and are therefore charged with tension. They can also be trigger points for violence when sections of the population do not feel confident in the results and feel that their voices are marginalised or repressed. This is often based on long standing grievances.

The European Union (EU) has been at the forefront of electoral observation with seven electoral observation missions in 2017. In 2015, the European Parliamentary Mediation Support published a report that addresses how EU institutions can better prevent electoral violence through a more coherent approach. The report includes a brief background on the root causes and triggers of electoral violence and on the role of early warning and conflict analysis in planning a strategic response.

Quaker organisations such as the American Friends Society Committee (AFSC) have contributed to reducing post-election violence in Kenya by designing programs that address underlying structural causes of conflict that date back to the country's colonial era. The work includes training on non-violent conflict resolutions, negotiation skills and advocacy. AFSC supports healing and reconciliation through community dialogues and has actively worked on building peace in different countries of the region, including Zimbabwe, around overcoming the trauma of past violence and addressing the root causes of violence. This is done through developing secure and sustainable livelihoods for youth and other vulnerable community members, and building community resilience and social cohesion. The primary theme of AFSC's regional shared security framework is prevention of election violence.

QCEA will soon be publishing a report that will show how a variety of sectors, including election monitoring, can be conducive to peacebuilding. The report provides examples on how elections can serve as a non violent means for managing differing or conflicting political ideologies and monitoring can play a valuable role in increasing public trust in the electoral process and the credibility of peaceful transitions of power and representation. EPLO regularly contributes to EU policy discussions on the prevention of election violence by bringing learning expertise from its 35 member organisations.

Against this backdrop, EPLO and QCEA are organising a lunch time discussion with civil society and EU policy makers on lessons from Kenya on preventative measures and how to ensure peaceful elections are conducive to long-term peacebuilding.

#### Questions under consideration:

1. How have the AFSC and the EU tried and contributed to the reduction of post-election violence in Kenya?
2. What lessons can be drawn from the recent elections in Kenya for upcoming elections in the region, in particular in Zimbabwe as the security situation evolves?
3. How can the EU and other actors ensure that efforts on the prevention of election violence also contribute to long-term peacebuilding?
4. How to engage with youth to ensure future generations of peaceful elections?

#### Agenda:

Opening remarks: Olivia Caeymaex, Peace Programme Lead, Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

Presentation: Kennedy Akolo, Regional Director, Africa, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

#### Respondents:

- Gerrard Quille, Head of the Mediation and Dialogue Unit, Directorate for Democracy Support, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament
- Julie Ward, Member of European Parliament

Moderator: Anna Penfrat, Senior Policy Officer at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)