

Waiting for justice in Kenya

Story Highlights

Group says more than 3,000 rapes committed after disputed 2007 Kenya elections

CARE interviewed 300 women to provide evidence to panel investigating violence

Most rape victims still await justice for attackers, compensation, spokeswoman says

Groups criticize Kenyan government; official says nation's doing "best that it can"

By Faith Karimi

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Editor's note: Ellyjoy Karimi, who is quoted in this story, is no relation to Faith Karimi, who wrote this story.

She calmly recounts her story, her voice firm, her face stoic, in a dim room in Nairobi's Kibera slums.

A year ago, amid the post-election violence that killed more than 1,300 people and displaced hundreds of thousands of others in Kenya, a police officer kicked her door two times and ordered her to open it. If she didn't, he said, he would tear it down on the third kick, the woman said.

She unlocked the door.

"He then slapped me ... and I fell on a water container, begging him not to hit me," she says in a video released by CARE International. "... Then he sexually assaulted me right in front of my children."

The woman is one of 300 interviewed by the nonprofit to provide evidence to the [Waki Commission](#), which was formed to investigate violence and crime after the disputed Kenya elections in December 2007. More than 3,000 rapes were committed during that period, according to the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya. CNN does not identify victims of sexual abuse.

CARE spokeswoman Beatrice Spadacini said about 60 of the women testified that they were sexually assaulted by men wearing police uniforms.

"A year later, most of the women and girls raped during the post-election chaos are still waiting for compensation and for their attackers to be brought to justice, Spadacini said.

The minister of gender and children affairs in [Kenya](#), Esther Mathenge, said it is not easy to convict.

"You have to remember that we don't have DNA equipment, we don't have witness protection," Mathenge said. "A lot of these women are afraid to testify in court. Investigations are going on. ... Kenya is doing the best that it can with what we have to bring the perpetrators to justice."

Mathenge said her office is offering the women legal support, adding that "most of these NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] just want to seem like they are doing more than the government is."

Millicent Obaso, a former regional adviser for HIV/AIDS in East and Central Africa, says the government has not done enough.

"Issues of women have never really been taken seriously in most African countries, and Kenya is not an exception," Obaso said.

Ellyjoy Karimi, project officer for CARE in Kenya, said efforts to pursue justice in rape cases are complicated by the victims' reluctance to report the crime.

There is "fear of being stigmatized in their communities or chased out of their homes by angry husbands," Karimi said. "There was also fear of reprisal from the perpetrators, many of whom are still out and about or are men in uniforms."

United Nations investigator Philip Alston recently slammed the Kenya police, saying the agency partakes in "systematic, widespread and carefully planned" extrajudicial killings "committed at will and with utter impunity." Alston, who released his findings Wednesday, called for the firing of the nation's attorney general and police commissioner.

Leaders of the East African nation have also been criticized for failure to form a tribunal to try perpetrators of post-election crimes. The proposal to form a special court, which did not get enough votes in parliament, was recommended by the Waki Commission.

In letters to President [Mwai Kibaki](#) and Prime Minister Raila Odinga on February 24, former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that not addressing post-election violence would "constitute a major setback in the fight against impunity and may threaten the whole reform agenda."

Annan said the [International Criminal Court](#) would be asked to intervene if the tribunal was not established.