

WORLD | Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Protests in Kenya over the death of a man under arrest

Albert Ojwang criticized law enforcement on his blog: first the police said he had "banged his head," then admitted it was not true



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Clashes between police and protesters during protests over the death of Albert Ojwang in Nairobi, Kenya, June 12, 2025 (AP Photo/Andrew Kasuku)

Large protests [havegoing on](#) been for days in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, over the death of 31-year-old political blogger Albert Ojwang last week while in police custody under circumstances that are still very unclear.

The Independent Police Oversight Authority of Kenya (IPOA) has

opened an investigation and arrested three people, **accused** of beating Ojwang at the behest of the officers. Also according to the Authority, Ojwang's was the 20th death under these circumstances since early 2025.

Ojwang had been arrested on June 6 in Homa Bay, western Kenya, following a defamation complaint by Deputy Police Chief Eliud Lagat: on his blog, Ojwang had repeatedly criticized him publicly and linked him to a major corruption scandal going on in Kenya. After his arrest, Ojwang was taken without explanation to the police station central Nairobi, 400 kilometers from his home. Two days later he was found dead in the facility.

Initially the police had said that he died by "banging his head against the cell wall," a reconstruction that was immediately deemed untrue, prompting protests. In fact, a subsequent autopsy by IPOA had determined that death was most likely caused by an assault: Ojwang had "head injuries, neck compression, and other diffuse injuries all over his body."

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The protests took place in Nairobi. They began peacefully on Monday, June 9, with some garrisons also taking place in front of the police station where Ojwang was found dead. Over the next few days they escalated, partly due to a violent crackdown by police forces: there were dozens of arrests, and during the protests on Tuesday, June 17, **at least one person died**, according to a *Reuters* reporter on the scene.

Based on some testimonies and videos circulated online, the local press wrote that the man was killed by some officers who hit him in the head and that he would not be a protester, but a person who was selling masks during the protest.

In recent days, the police station chief, another officer and a technician accused of turning off the facility's surveillance cameras have been arrested. The other police officers on duty, although not under investigation, have been suspended for the time being. Speaking before the Senate on Wednesday, the head of the

Police Douglas Kanja **publicly apologized** for the initial claim that Ojwang committed suicide and said the blogger "did not hit his head against the wall," blaming "misinformation" given to him by his younger colleagues.

On Monday, June 16, **finally resigned** Eliud Lagat, the deputy police chief whose complaint had led to Ojwang's arrest, also . In announcing his decision, Lagat did not explicitly mention his connection to the case, and called Ojwang's death an "unfortunate accident."

The systemic violence and extrajudicial killings carried out by the forces of order continue to be a problem in Kenya, despite the fact that after his election in 2022 President William Ruto promised to solve them. In During 2024, the NGO Kenya Human Rights Commission counted 160 extrajudicial killings committed by police. Last year, during **large protests against bill a tax increase** (later **withdrawn** by the



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