

KENYA: Here Come Kofi Annan Yet Again

Beatrice Spadacini (October 05, 2009)



Kofi Annan urges Kenyan leaders to take action, implement reforms and be accountable.

Nairobi (5 October, 2009) – Today Kofi Annan arrives once again in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. His mission has not changed since the last time he was here, a few months ago: to urge the Kenyan leaders to go ahead with the promised reforms. Among them is the dismissal of a few top Kenyan officials – read the Attorney General and the Chief Justice – due to their dubious track record in pursuing justice and prosecuting those responsible for the post election violence that rocked the country in early 2008 and those who have been implicated in major corruption scandals.



Until not too long ago, I could spot on the back of Matutus—small mini buses that serve as the main mode of transport for the majority of Kenyans—posters of Kofi Annan. Below his picture, the images read “the peacemaker” or “the mediator” because of the role the former Secretary General of the United Nations played during the post election violence in Kenya and his support for the current coalition government. As of late, those images have become rarer.

Is it because Annan’s presence nowadays has become slightly more uncomfortable? After all he is coming to Kenya to remind the very same coalition government he supported in 2008 to be accountable to its citizens, to be true to its word and to implement the promised reforms. Annan has become a thorn in the back of the Kenyan government and perhaps he is less popular than he was one year ago because now he won’t let Kenya off the hook. In addition to being a prominent African ‘elder’ he is also a representative of the international community.

Apart from the removal of a few top government officials, Annan is also here because of the need to prosecute those responsible for the post election violence. He is the one who just a few months ago turned over a ‘secret’ envelope with the names of those suspected of fueling post election violence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. It is really no longer a secret that the list of suspects includes prominent politicians (at least four MPs) and business people. Apart from the outright naming the MPs everything else about them is common knowledge.

The ICC’s goal is not to replace justice in Kenya but to ensure justice is indeed accomplished and unfortunately, the current Kenyan government is not keeping its word. The deal was to create a local tribunal that would prosecute those responsible for the death of 1300 people and the displacement of hundred of thousands. Almost two years after the contested elections, there are still thousands of people who live in camps for the internally displaced. Unfortunately, more than one deadline for setting up a local tribunal has been missed. It is fairly obvious that the current Kenyan Government is unwilling to address the issue of impunity.

So here comes Kofi Annan yet again. Ever so patient, ever so focused, he comes to remind the Kenyan Government that it is time to get serious and to stop playing games. Will he manage to persuade the current leadership to get down to business? In a bold move, the women of Kenya tried to do that not too long ago. They had called for a sex strike and appealed to all women, including the First Lady and the wife of the Prime Minister to abstain from sex until their male leaders got back to the business of governing the country. It was a clever move that did result, among other things, in Parliament reconvening. Will Kofi Annan announce a new strike of some sort? What will it take for Kenyan leaders to truly act as LEADERS?



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