



Kenya - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 6 and 7 October 2010

Information on the Mungiki in Gathaiki Karatini

A *New York Times* article from April 2009 mentioning Karatina states:

“In Karatina, a predominantly Kikuyu area, the Mungiki extorted a dollar a day from bicycle taxi drivers, police officials said.” (New York Times (21 April 2009) *Kenyan Town Strikes Back Against Its Tormenters*)

A *BBC News* report in April 2009 mentioning Karatina states:

“At least 24 people have died in fighting between residents of a central Kenyan town and suspected members of the outlawed Mungiki sect, police say. A police spokesman, Charles Owino, said residents of Karatina had decided to fight back because the sect had been extorting money from local people.” (BBC News (21 April 2009) *Kenyan sect violence 'kills 24'*)

A news story from October 2010 in *The Standard* mentions Gathaithi noting:

“Mercy Muthoni, 27, gazes blankly into the horizon as she ponders a future without her husband. It is more than a year since he disappeared from their Gathaithi village home in Mathira, Nyeri, as vigilante gangs roamed the area. At the time, the gangs were hunting down members of the outlawed mungiki sect, who they accused of committing several murders. In turn, mungiki hit back in April last year and killed 29 people at Gathaithi village.” (The Standard (4 October 2010) *'Please come home, daddy'*)

In November 2009 *The Standard* noting Gathaithi reports:

“Already, the might of the vigilantes has been exhibited by the recent killings of two youths in Ihwagi village in Mathira on suspicion that they were members of the sect. The two, one of them a secondary school student, were brutally executed by members of a vigilante group in an area near Gathaithi village in Mathira where 29 people were massacred on April 21.” (The Standard (4 November 2009) *Vigilantes, Mungiki brace for war*)

Gathaithi is mentioned in a report by the *Daily Nation* in October 2009 where it is noted:

“They say the law is an ass, but for residents of Gathaithi village, in Mathira East, where 29 people were brutally killed by people said to be Mungiki members, the law simply does not exist. ‘There are no laws in the country, there is no government,’ says a bitter Ann Wanjiku Maina. Her son, James Muriuki Maina, would be among this year’s KCSE examination candidates at Muragara Secondary School. It was not meant to be — he was among the 29 people brutally hacked to death on April 21. Men and women, young and old in the lush green village of Gathaithi are still baffled by last weekend’s release of 22 people arrested in connection with the massacre

that shocked the world six months ago.” (Daily Nation (27 October 2009) *A village that lives in fear of Mungiki raid*)

A report in May 2009 by the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* refers to Gathaithi, noting:

“Twenty eight (28) villagers in Gathaithi village in Nyeri district (Central province) were killed in cold blood by members of the outlawed Mungiki sect. Local media showed graphic images of slain bodies. The killings came one week after villagers (through vigilante groups) took the law into their own hands lynching to death seven suspected members of the Mungiki sect. The villagers ignored earlier warnings from the District Commissioner whom they accuse is slow to act when cases of extortion and killings have been brought to his attention. The outlawed Mungiki is a local militia that uses brutal methods to extort money from traders and force its ideology in Kenya.” (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (4 May 2009) *Kenya Humanitarian Update vol. 47, 10 April- 4 May, 2009*, p.2)

In May 2009 the *Daily Nation* refers to Gathaithi, stating:

“Attempts to eliminate members of the outlawed sect from Kirinyaga District by lynching them turned bloody last month after sect members struck Gathaithi Village in Karatina, killing 29 villagers in a mission to avenge the killing of 14 members of the sect by the vigilantes.” (Daily Nation (3 May 2009) *Vigilantes hand over Mungiki suspects to police*)

The *Daily Nation* in May 2009 mentions Gathaithi, stating:

“Gathaithi Village in Mathira, Nyeri, is not your traditional sleepy rural hamlet. Endowed with rich volcanic soils and the cool climate on the windward side of Mt Kenya, it has been vibrant with life. Lush tea bushes, dairy cattle, goats and horticultural crops demonstrate years of productive economic activity and a culture of hard work. Permanent houses dot the landscape. But the horrid events of April 20 that left 30 villagers dead and scores of others worried for their security have sapped life out of Gathaithi. Grieving residents have yet to come to terms with the immense loss at the hands of a gang believed to be members of the outlawed Mungiki sect. A visit to the village a week after the night of long knives revealed that economic activity — mainly tea farming and cattle rearing — has slowed to a near halt.” (Daily Nation (2 May 2009) *Villages face new challenges after Mungiki attacks*)

A report in the *Daily Nation* in April 2009 mentions Gathaithi, noting:

“They crept out of the night like ghouls, dozens of Mungiki followers, the axes, pangas and rungus in their hands betraying their intentions: to kill. In their wake, they left devastated families, mutilated bodies and a despairing sense that the spreading pools of blood could well cover the whole land. The sect had regrouped to retaliate the killing of 14 of its members by vigilantes. They selected Gathaithi village in Nyeri East District in Kenya's Central Province and planned mass murder with cold blooded precision. Central provincial police boss John M'Mbijiwe said: “The attackers burnt a house to attract as many villagers as possible and then lay in wait for them and butchered them.” At 2.30am, they set the house on fire, burning to death two of the occupants, and lay in wait for villagers to respond to the cries of distress. When the villagers and vigilantes came out to help, the Mungiki set on them, one after the other as they arrived at the burning house, hacking 18 to death on the spot with axes and machetes and abducting seven others. Seven were also killed at

Kiaruhiu trading centre. In the cold light of the mountain morning, the village was a scene from hell: there were bodies strewn all over, with cuts in every part, some with throats slit. And the soil was spotted with blood. The Mungiki are believed to have regrouped in Karatina after villagers, fed up with the sect's tyranny and extortion, had smoked them out. The attack came barely an hour after a police patrol had passed through the village." (Daily Nation (21 April 2009) *Mungiki kill villagers in night raid*)

In January 2010 a report by *Landinfo* on the Mungiki states:

"According to a well-informed international source, Mungiki has developed into just another organised criminal gang using extortion and violence to achieve its goals, which appears to be primarily materialistic. Mungiki members are involved both in criminal violence and political violence – particularly in relation to the general elections in December 2007. Further, Mungiki has communicated its increasing political ambitions regarding the general elections in 2012, and claims to address the poor's political dissatisfaction..." (Landinfo (29 January 2010) *Kenya: Mungiki – Abusers or abused?*, p.15)

The *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* provides background information on the Mungiki in a research paper released in November 2009, including the following:

"The Mungiki sect was originally established in the 1980s as a "self-defence force" for Kenya's largest ethnic group, the Kiyuku (The New York Times 22 Apr. 2009; UN 22 Feb. 2008). They are inspired by the Mau Mau, who fought for Kenya's independence from the British through guerrilla warfare (ibid.; The New York Times 22 Apr. 2009; AFP 21 Apr. 2009). Sources describe the sect as a secretive, quasi-religious, part gang, part mafia-like group that engages in criminal activity and violent intimidation (The New York Times 22 Apr. 2009; AFP 21 Apr. 2009; Wall Street Journal 1 May 2008)." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (16 November 2009) *Kenya: Activities of the Mungiki sect and response by government authorities (2008 - October 2009)*)

In March 2009 a report by *Reuters* on the Mungiki states:

"The gang consists mainly of youths from Kenya's largest tribe, the Kikuyu, and began as a hardline offshoot of the Tent of the Living God, a religious sect that espoused a return to traditional tribal beliefs and a rejection of Western values." (Reuters (6 March 2009) *Key facts about Kenya's Mungiki gang*)

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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