# The Globalisation of Private Security

Country Report: Kenya

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## Introduction

Fear and insecurity have become defining features of life in Kenya. The UN characterises Nairobi as one of the world's most dangerous capital cities, and insecurity is a major deterrent to tourism, foreign investment and economic growth in the country. High levels of violence and crime, combined with a lack of confidence and trust in the public police force, have resulted in a proliferation of private security providers. Some 2000 private security companies (PSCs) currently operate in the country, and large sections of the population rely on private providers for their everyday security.[1]

Although the private security industry in Kenya is increasingly recognised as playing an important role in fostering conditions conducive to development, investment and growth, the sector confronts a number of difficult challenges. Private security companies are unarmed, but operate in a highly armed environment where criminal individuals and gangs have easy access to firearms. Coordination and cooperation with the police is unstructured, and often inefficient and ineffective. Fears are also frequently voiced that the private security sector itself has become a source of insecurity, as poorly paid guards may collude with criminals and conspire against clients. The sector is at present largely unregulated, and standards of service and professionalism vary considerably.

The potential hazards of an unregulated sector have recently been recognised by the government, and attempts are currently underway to introduce legislation. While this move is in principle widely supported by security providers, it has also yielded significant disagreements over the form, impact, and likely effectiveness of regulation. These disagreements reflect the fundamental divergences arising from the current structure of the security market, as well as the politics of protection in Kenya today. This report provides a brief overview the private security sector in Kenya, its relationship to public policing and the key challenges facing the sector in the future.



[1] R. Ngugi, et.al. (2004) *Security Risk and Private Sector Growth in Kenya: A Survey Report* (Nairobi; Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis); A. Stavrou (2002) *Crime in Nairobi: Results of a Citywide Victim Survey*, Safer Cities Series #4 (Nairobi; UN Habitat); F. Wairagu, J. Kamenju and M. Singo (2004) *Private Security in Kenya*, (Nairobi: Security Research and Information Centre [SRIC]).

## The Growth of Crime and Private Security

Both the rise in crime and the growth of the private security sector in Kenya are intimately connected to the erosion of state capacities and services that began in the late 1980s and continued throughout the 1990s. For Kenya, as for so many other African countries, this was a period of declining economic prosperity. State expenditure and investment were drastically reduced, often in line with international donor requirements for economic liberalisation and structural adjustment. The result was a continuing deterioration of the ability of government and municipal institutions to deliver services, including the provision of law and order. At the same time, the state elite showed little inclination to curtail its own appetite, and corruption and mismanagement of state assets continued unabated. As the capacity of the state declined, so too did its previous ability to provide employment, contributing to a rapidly expanding problem of urban unemployment, swelling the shantytowns and informal settlements around major cities.

This setting has provided the conditions for an increasingly criminalised environment. Crime in Kenya, and particularly in the capital, has risen sharply in the last decade, to the extent that crime levels in Nairobi are now far higher than in comparable cities. A recent victimisation survey of Nairobi found that 66 percent of respondents had been victims of crime, while 86 percent had witnessed crime within the city.[2] The survey also found that the levels of insecurity are increasing, and there is a clear sense among the population that crime has become more violent, more ruthless and also more organised.

According to the same study, there is also a strong perception among Kenyans that criminals are collaborating more extensively with law enforcement agents. The police are under-funded and poorly paid, even after recent pay rises, and often resort to extortion and corruption in order to subsidise their wages. In addition, the police force has frequently been implicated in political intimidation and violence, especially during the Presidency of Daniel arap Moi.[3] As a result, the public has little confidence and trust in the police, and in one survey 36 percent of people attributed all crime in Nairobi directly or indirectly to the police force.[4] Whatever the reliability of such figures, they reflect a deep and widespread distrust in the police, and the extent to which the police are frequently regarded as part of the problem rather than the solution to crime and disorder. Even the most positive appraisals, which acknowledge recent improvements following reforms and increased resources, concede that the reliability of the police force remains woefully below satisfactory standards, despite the dedication of many individual police personnel.

As the state has failed to provide protection for its citizens, people have organised in various ways to maximise their own safety. The growth of private security companies is one element of this politics of protection; the formation of various forms of neighbourhood watches or vigilante groups another. While the more affluent sections of the population



2 *Security Risk and Private Sector Growth in Kenya: A Survey Report*.

3 See Human Rights Watch/Africa Watch (1993) *Divide and Rule: State-sponsored Ethnic Violence in Kenya* (New York); Kenya Human Rights Commission (1998) *Killing the Vote: State-sponsored Violence and the Flawed Elections in Kenya* (Nairobi); Amnesty International (1998) *Kenya-Political Violence Spirals* (London).

4 *Crime in Nairobi: Results of a Citywide Victim Survey*.

can afford to hire private security firms, the majority of people rely on more informal forms of protection. Vigilante groups are now common in most poor estates and informal settlements around Nairobi, providing some level of protection in the face of rising levels of crime and police inefficiency but also occasionally involving extortion and violence between rival vigilante groups.[5]

High crime rates, combined with the inability of the public security services to provide adequate protection, are thus the main factors driving the expansion of private security in Kenya today. In addition, fear of international terrorism following the attack on the US embassy in 1998, and the hotel bombing and failed missile attack on an Israeli airliner in Mombasa in 2002 have increased demand for security services, especially among international clients. The US State Department still gives Nairobi its highest, 'critical' ranking for both crime and international terrorism, while the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office similarly warns of a high risk of terrorism. Nairobi is home to a number of international organisations and national embassies, including the second largest US embassy on the African continent. Nairobi is also the regional headquarter for the United Nations, and taken together international clients provide a substantial and particularly lucrative market for private security companies.



5 Such violence is frequently reported to have political overtones, including the Kariobangi massacre in March 2002, when clashes between the Mungiki and the Taliban groups killed 20 people and injured a further 30. See D. Anderson (2002) 'Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya', *African Affairs* 101(405), pp.531-555.

## Overview of the Private Security Sector in Kenya

### *Size and Growth*

Private security provision has a long history in Kenya, and companies like KK Security, Factory Guards (now Security Group) and Securicor have operated in the country since the 1960s. The main expansion of the sector can be dated to the late 1980s and early 1990s, and private security continues to be one of the fastest growing sectors of the Kenyan economy. According to one study, there are currently as many as 2000 private security companies in the country.[6] It is however important to note that no exact number is available, and some industry participants estimate that the number of companies is around 400. The main reason for this discrepancy is that no special licence is required and security companies are registered in the same manner as any other business. In addition, a vast number of companies are not registered at all.

The companies vary considerably in size, with the majority being small to medium-sized, owner-managed companies, employing less than 100 people. The majority of companies operate in only one locality or town, whereas the major companies have operations in several main towns as well as rural areas. The highest concentration of companies is in Nairobi, where there may be as many as 500 PSCs. Despite this large number, the sector is dominated by approximately ten leading companies. The largest company in terms of number of employees is Securicor (now part of Group4Securicor), with nearly 10,000 employees and operations in 68 different locations across the country. Other main players include KK Security with approximately 5,000 employees, Security Group with approximately 3,800 employees, as well as BM Security, Securex, Patriotic Guards, Ultimate Security, and ArmorGroup, amongst others. Most of these companies operate throughout the country, although some have chosen to restrict their operations to Nairobi.

### *Services and Market Dynamics*

The private security market in Kenya is highly differentiated and highly competitive. While the leading PSCs offer a package of advanced, integrated security services, the vast majority of companies provide only low-skilled manned guarding services. This differentiation is recognised within the sector, with some representatives describing a three-tier structure; at the top, a few big companies offering integrated security solutions at a high cost; a larger, middle tier, providing predominantly guarding, but also some use of technology; and then finally, a bottom tier of small, often unregistered companies, offering only manned guarding at very low prices. Nevertheless, guarding remains to a significant extent the bread and butter for most companies, resulting in intense competition as companies from all three tiers may bid for the same contracts.



[6] *Private Security in Kenya.*

The main market for private security services is commercial clients, ranging from industries, banks, government agencies and commercial farms to embassies, international organisations, NGOs, and refugee camps. The leading companies offer a full range of services, including electronic intruder alarm systems, radio alarm response, perimeter protection and access control, guard dogs, satellite tracking, as well as in some cases fire and rescue services, whereas the majority of companies provide only manned guarding for access control and perimeter patrol. Cash-in-transit and cash management is a growing and expanding part of the business, as more and more clients realise their vulnerability in an increasingly armed environment.

The residential market is relatively small, comprising, according to one study, only 10.7 percent of total business.[7] Residential security is highly segmented, and only a minority of private residences can afford the services of the leading companies. The cost of alarms and rapid response services in Nairobi currently stands at between 6,000-7,000 Kenyan Shillings, while the addition of a 24-hour guard service will take the total monthly cost to around Ksh 50,000. This service is thus outside the financial reach of the vast majority of households, and at the upper end, residential security services are affordable only to wealthy citizens, expatriates and employees of international organisations, embassies, etc. Accordingly, the majority of residents who can afford some form of private security rely on the small, often unregistered companies, which provide guards at the cost of between 3000-5000 shillings a month, or they organise various forms of neighbourhood watch schemes, including vigilante groups, to improve their collective security.

There is a general sense that the top-tier (and perhaps also the second-tier) of the security market in Kenya (and in Nairobi in particular) will undergo a period of consolidation and mergers, as there are currently a very high number of companies competing for a relatively stable market. To a certain extent, a process of consolidation is already underway, in that KK Security recently acquired EARS, and Securicor purchased Falcon Security. There is speculation that mergers of a similar nature will occur in the future, and that a number of owner-mangers are looking to sell their businesses as going concerns. This is likely to foster further change in the dynamics of the industry. As one participant put it, owner-managed companies are largely driven by the desire to “maximise the incomes and life-styles of the owners”, not to maximise profit and foster growth along a corporate model. A move towards increasingly large, corporate and professionally-managed companies is likely to have a significant impact on the evolution of the industry and the services it develops, particularly by creating economies of scale and providing improved access to capital.

There is also general agreement that the upper-end of the security market in Kenya is moving increasingly toward technological solutions, and that the future may well be increasingly dominated by alarmed response services rather than the traditional manned guarding. Private security vehicles are highly visible around Nairobi’s more wealthy areas and suburbs, parked at strategically central points ready to respond to calls from clients. The alarmed response service is unarmed, and when responding to an emergency call, PSCs will generally send one vehicle to the client and one



7 *Private Security in Kenya*, p. 34.

to the nearest police station. Currently, the alarmed response market is limited by the relatively low number of residents who can afford the service, leading in turn to high costs for the companies. However, with the introduction of cheaper alarm systems, it is possible that larger PSCs with a mobile response capability could provide unmanned security to a much wider client base and at a much lower cost. This would entail a considerable structural change to the industry, allowing the larger, more technologically advanced companies to make inroads into broader sections of the market from which they are currently excluded by price competition. It would also make it more akin to the way the sector operates in, for example, South Africa than to the labour-intensive, manned guarding that has traditionally dominated in Kenya. At this moment in time, however, the development of this model is inhibited not only by economic and technological barriers, but also by the lack of coordination (and often cooperation) between the police and the private security industry. The relationship with the police will be discussed in further detail below.

### *Regional Expansion*

A number of Nairobi-based companies have expanded into other East African countries, and Kenyan companies have a significant share of the private security market in several neighbouring countries. The early development and growth of the sector in Kenya has given companies a competitive advantage in countries like Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, where the private security market is now expanding. KK Security has the largest operations in East Africa, with offices and personnel in Tanzania, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Rwanda, where the company has almost 50 percent of the alarm market in the capital Kigali. Security Group also has a significant regional presence, with offices in Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia. Similarly, Ultimate Security has established branches in Uganda and Tanzania, while Securex has offices in Uganda. Currently, Kenya is serving as a hub for the expansion of various humanitarian and development activities into southern Sudan and also the DRC, and for PSCs this presents new opportunities with international organisations, NGOs and various types of extractive industries making up the bulk of potential clients. KK Security is currently the only Kenyan company with operations in Goma and Bukuva in eastern DRC and the company is also considering expanding into the Sudan.

## Policies and Regulatory Framework

### *The Move Towards Regulation*

Responsibility for private security companies falls under the Minister of Internal Security, located in the Office of the President. However, at present there are no regulations pertaining to the sector, and no special requirement for the registration and licensing of private security companies. Hence, it is a common complaint among representatives of the sector that it is as easy to start a private security company as it is to open an ice cream kiosk, and there is general concern that this lack of regulation has resulted in a vast number of unprofessional companies, providing poor services and ruthlessly exploiting their guard forces.

Following lobbying by the security industry, as well as increasing concern and pressure from clients in the business community, there is now a draft Bill seeking to regulate the sector. Although the particulars of this Bill have not yet been made public, it appears to be drafted largely on the model of the South African and UK legislation and seeks to establish a Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority, as well as a Board to oversee it. There are also suggestions that the Bill will bar members of the armed forces and the National Security Intelligence Service from running security companies, and will require all former members of the armed forces and police to get a clearance certificate before registering a PSC. Sources within the sector indicate that the proposed Bill pays scant attention to industry standards in terms of training, wages, and services, and there are also fears that its powers of enforcement may be insufficient.

At present, it is unclear when the Bill will go to Parliament, and there is also some controversy as to how committed the government actually is to implementing the Bill, if passed. That said, the draft Bill is the first sign that the government has recognised the importance of the private security sector for the overall security situation in Kenya.

### *Employment and the Quality of Staff*

The private security sector is a major source of employment in Kenya, and it is currently estimated that the sector employs 48,811 people. Given the high dependency ratios in the country, it is further estimated that that the industry supports indirectly a total of 195,524 people.[8] Private security is thus an important part of the economy, providing much needed employment.

Despite the size of the sector, there are no regulations or requirements in terms of the training and vetting of guards, and the quality of training and services vary considerably from company to company. Most companies provide some training for their guard force, but some PSCs place guards on duty with little or no knowledge of basic security provision, while others provide fairly extensive courses. Given the unevenness of training and standards, concerns are frequently



[8] *Private Security in Kenya,* p.45.

raised about the quality and integrity of security staff, with allegations that guards are in collusion with criminals. While most companies claim that they undertake some form of recruitment vetting, and require potential employees to certify that they have no criminal record, they freely acknowledge that the reliability of this information is highly questionable. As part of their effort to ensure higher quality and standards, the Kenya Security Industry Association (KSIA) requires all its members to subscribe to 'Staff Check', a database that contains information on employees, including guards previously employed by PSCs or laid-off for misconduct. Members of the other main industry association, the Protective Security Industry Association (PSIA) are not required to subscribe to this service, and it is clear that the quality of vetting and background checking of potential employees is highly variable between companies. Given strong concerns over collusion between guards and organised criminal activities, vetting and background checks are of vital importance to the reputation of the sector.

### *Wages and Working Conditions*

The stipulation of a minimum wage is currently the main, and most controversial, area of government regulation of the private security sector. Guarding is a notoriously low-paid occupation, and this is also the case in Kenya, where guards often work very long hours for very little remuneration. In an effort to contain the level of exploitation, the government in May 2003 introduced a new minimum wage for the sector.[9] Including monthly housing and other allowances, this brought the minimum wage for a guard to Ksh 9469. It is, however, clear that salaries continue to vary considerably between companies, and according to one study, the majority of guards (50.1%) earn between 1,500 and 2,500 shillings per month.[10] The highest paid guards are employed on the biggest single security contract in the Kenyan market: KK Security's contract with the American Embassy, an extensive operation involving 750 guards earning between KSh 18,000–50,000 a month. A common practice in many companies is to pay guards different wages depending on which contract they are assigned to, thus causing considerable discontent as guards at the same level of experience can earn very different wages. This practice also means that guards are at risk of losing out as competition forces companies to lower their prices. As will be discussed below, the declaration of a minimum wage for the sector is one of the most controversial issues in the industry today, with many companies refusing publicly to adhere to the Legal Notice.

Working conditions for guards also vary considerably. For some, the normal working day is 12 hours, with one day off per week or per fortnight. Others report no overtime, and no annual leave. Similarly, lack of insurance and social benefits for guards is a problem, and there is little enforcement and control of working conditions. It should also be highlighted that guarding is a *very* dangerous occupation in Kenya. Guards are issued only with a baton and a whistle, whereas criminals often carry firearms, machetes and other weapons. As a result, attacks and violence towards security guards are not uncommon, and sources within the sector estimate that within greater Nairobi and greater Mombasa



9 Legal Notice No. 53 'The Regulation of Wages (Protective Security Services) (Amendment) Order, 2003'. (Nairobi: Ministry for Labour and Human Resource Development, Kenya Subsidiary Legislation, Government Printer, May 2003).

10 *Private Security in Kenya,* p. 94.

combined, between 5 and 10 security guards are killed each month. One leading company interviewed had lost 15 guards in the first 10 months of 2004, whereas other PSCs reported frequent violent incidents towards guards. While guards are instructed to withdraw and wait for police assistance when faced with aggressive and/or armed intruders, it is clear that they remain a first line of defence and hence at risk from violence. In this context, many companies express concerns that police regulations make it difficult to issue guards with body armour, as this requires a firearms certificate. Tellingly, in the SRIC survey, guards listed insecurity as their second main concern, topped only by complaints over low wages.[11] Despite this high incidence of violence, no nation- or industry-wide statistics of guards hurt and killed on duty appears to exist, and the issue has received surprisingly little public attention.

### *Industry Associations*

There are currently two rival industry associations in Kenya: the Kenya Security Industry Association (KSIA) and the Protective Services Industry Association (PSIA). Broadly speaking, KSIA is an association of the bigger companies, whereas PSIA consists of the medium to smaller PSCs. KSIA is the older of the two associations and currently has a membership of 21 companies. The main aim of KSIA is to establish and maintain quality standards and good practices in the sector, and also to provide a central organisation to liase with government, police and emergency services. KSIA specifies technical and operational standards that all members must comply with, aiming to make KSIA membership a 'seal of quality' to clients. In principle, membership is open to all PSCs, and inspections are undertaken to ensure that the standards are adhered to. In the past, companies have been expelled for failing to comply with the requirements. KSIA has also endorsed the new minimum wage, as stipulated in Legal Notice 53, and adherence to this is a requirement for membership. Members are also required to pay an initial joining fee of KSh50, 000, plus a yearly membership fee of between KSh 40,000-160,000, depending on the size of the company.

PSIA was founded in direct response to the new minimum wage requirements, and currently has a membership of approximately 30 companies. Legal Notice 53 increased the minimum wage by 12.5 percent, thereby significantly adding to the cost of salaries for private security companies. The PSIA argues that the new minimum wage would make security available only to the wealthy, and also that it would force a number of smaller security companies out of business. Hence, PSIA members have openly stated that they will not comply with the minimum wage requirement, and to date there are no signs that the government will attempt to enforce the regulations. On the contrary, the Minister for Planning and National Development, Professor Peter Anyang'Nyong'o, was present at the launch of PSIA, endorsing its contributions to Kenyan security and thus casting significant doubt as to the government's commitment to enforce the minimum wage. To date, PSIA has concentrated on the wage issue, and has done little work or lobbying in terms of broader sector issues. The two industry associations are discussed in more detail below.



[11] *Private Security in Kenya,* p. 93.

### *Monitoring and Review*

As there are currently no government monitoring or review processes for PSCs, this role falls to the industry associations. To a significant extent, KSIA performs this function with respect of its own members. PSIA is also seeking to enforce professional standards, but as of yet no procedures exist. The extent to which the proposed Private Security Regulatory Authority will be able to monitor and review PSCs remains to be seen. However, the government's inconsistency in regards to the minimum wage issue does not give cause for optimism.

## Co-operation in the Security Sector

Despite Kenya's very high level of crime and insecurity, there is remarkably little co-operation and co-ordination of security initiatives. The relationship between the police and the private sector is often characterised by competition and suspicion, and a lack of policy consistency undermines oft-stated desires to achieve greater coordination and effectiveness. A lack of clear direction from the police and/or the government over the appropriate role of private security and the relationship between the public and private security sectors has exacerbated this situation, as have divisions within the private security industry itself. Attempts are currently underway, sponsored by the government, to create a 'security working group' as a first step toward increased clarity and cooperation among the participants in the security sector and other key stakeholders. If successful, this process could play an important role in creating a forum for discussion and planning for the future direction of security provision in Kenya.

### *Divisions within the Private Security Industry*

As outlined above, there are currently two rival industry associations in Kenya. Considerable opposition and mutual suspicion exist between the two, especially concerning the wage issue, and there is a perception amongst many of the smaller firms that the government's new wage structure is an effort by KSIA to force the smaller providers out of business. PSIA representatives claim that the smaller companies cannot afford to pay the new minimum wage, and that a large number would go bankrupt were the wages to be enforced. Hence, PSIA has openly declared its boycott of the minimum wage, and the member companies openly continue to pay considerably below the stipulated minimum. To date, there is no sign that the government is interested in enforcing the minimum wage, and no action has been taken against PSIA or individual companies. On the contrary, as mentioned above, a government minister was present at the launch of PSIA, welcoming the initiative as a positive move towards increased security.

PSIA is currently lobbying the government for a more differentiated private security structure, where different wages are permitted depending on the level and quality of service provided. The Chairman of PSIA suggests a three-tier model, where the top tier companies provide highly trained guards and integrated security solutions, and the lower tiers offer less intensive and less sophisticated solutions – such as standard residential guarding – and where salaries vary according to the quality and level of the service. According to PSIA, this would allow for the provision of security to all sections of the population, rather than making private security available only to the wealthy. PSIA rejects notions of exploiting the labour force by paying below the minimum wage, arguing that there are "plenty of people on the street" willing to work for the wages offered. According to the association, the main consequences of the government's regulation would be to force many security companies out of business, to deprive a significant section of the population of security provision, and to exacerbate an already difficult unemployment situation.

KSIA, on the other hand, is frustrated over the government's unwillingness to enforce the minimum wage, and argues that low paid guards represent a significant security threat while also harming the sector's reputation. In addition, it is clear that PSIA members, by openly breaking the law, are gaining a competitive advantage over other companies, by being able to offer guards to clients at a much lower price. Notably, KSIA companies report having lost government contracts to PSIA companies, as the latter have been able to offer manned guarding significantly more cheaply by paying below the minimum wage. The fact that the government is not only turning a blind eye, but is also actively allowing these companies to benefit from breaking the law, is indicative of the lack of co-ordination of policies and casts doubts on the government's ability and willingness to enforce any new regulation.

There are also important political overtones to the controversies and conflicts between the two industry associations. KSIA companies are sometimes portrayed as 'foreign' and/or expatriate companies, with its biggest member Securicor being part of one of the world's largest security companies (Group4Securicor), and a number of KSIA members employing expatriate managers. By contrast, PSIA members present themselves as 'indigenous' companies unfairly disadvantaged by their lack of access to international capital and by the biased preference of many large clients towards hiring 'foreign' firms. While such conflicts clearly need to be understood as part of the broader commercial competition within the sector, they also reflect the manner in which the private security industry is often linked to sensitive political issues and struggles.

### *Co-operation with the Police*

The relationship between private security providers and the public police is crucially important in the effective delivery of security. In Kenya, this relationship is influenced by the lack of any clear regulatory framework for the private sector, and the absence of a clear and consistent policy framework structuring the public-private security relationship. This is in part a consequence of different levels of police jurisdiction making specific arrangements with private security providers in their areas, and in part due to changes in leadership and the police reform processes currently underway. For these reasons, there is at present little formalised co-operation between the public and the private security sectors. A high degree of suspicion also exists, with the police inclined to regard private security guards as frequent law-breakers and PSCs quick to point out the involvement of police officers in criminal activities.

Currently, a number of different forms of co-operation exist between the PSCs and the police, but most of these are ad-hoc and not formalised. Co-operation with the division of the Kenyan Police Force known as the Administration Police is perhaps the most straightforward, in that this is an armed force for hire to clients, including embassies, banks, supermarkets and PSCs. The Administration Police is sometimes hired by PSCs for Cash-in-Transit, at the cost of approximately US$3 per officer per hour. The high costs of the Administration Police make this an unaffordable arrangement for many companies. In addition, personnel from the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) are stationed at many embassies and particular high-risk sites, and co-operate with PSCs in these instances.

On a day to day basis, however, the most important form of co-operation between PSCs and the police is in the form of responding to incidents and alarms from clients. The private security sector in Kenya is unarmed, and PSCs accordingly rely on police backup for any serious incident involving firearms and other weapons. Most security companies report that the number of armed incidents has increased significantly in recent months, with many companies referring to more than five incidents a week involving firearms. This poses a serious challenge: simply responding with non-armed guards provides limited security for clients, while simultaneously placing guards in significant danger. Guards are instructed to withdraw and wait for police assistance in the case of any serious incident, and PSCs will frequently send a vehicle to pick up police officers in order to ensure a more rapid response. In the case of alarmed response services, current practice is to send one vehicle to the incident and another to the nearest police station to transport the required number of officers to the scene. This not only potentially delays effective response time, but also carries the risk that there may be no available police officers at the station.

There is a clear sense among most PSCs that this arrangement is unsatisfactory. As they point out, PSCs and police have a common interest in preventing crime, and whereas the police are short on transport and resources, the PSCs have approximately 200 alarm response vehicles stationed at strategic locations around Nairobi at any one time. KSIA is currently lobbying for the reinstatement of a previous pilot arrangement, whereby individual PSCs took main responsibility for various residential areas and the police provided two officers per PSC vehicle. While this arrangement predominantly increased security to residential customers that could afford to pay for private services, the vehicles also responded to incidents involving non-paying members of the public. That said, it is unclear precisely how the division of public and private responsibilities and priorities is determined under such arrangements.

The pilot project was terminated for unknown reasons by the new Provincial Police Officer, and currently the relationship between PSCs and the police appears to be largely informal and ad-hoc. Whereas some companies appear to have succeeded in hiring police officers on their patrol vehicles through ad-hoc arrangements, the majority patrol without police or any armed support. While one industry representative describes the PSC-police relationship as “totally collapsed”, it is probably more correct to say that it depends to a large extent on the personal relationships between company directors, high level police officials, and individual station commanders. In other words, the relationship between PSCs and police in Kenya today is primarily of a private nature, depending on individual contacts, rather than any formalised relationship or contract. Several representatives of the sector stressed the need for the relationship to be formalised, and documented, in order to minimise its arbitrary and ad-hoc nature.

## Future Considerations

### *Regulatory Issues*

The key challenge facing the Kenyan private security sector is the development of a regulatory framework for licensing and monitoring, in order to ensure higher standards and quality of service. It is also crucial that steps are taken to improve the safety of security guards.

There is a clear concern across the PSC sector that its unarmed status is becoming increasingly inadequate in a setting of rising crime and violence. A few companies appear to circumvent the problem by arming a small proportion of their guards through individual firearms licences, a practice that is not illegal but also not officially recognised. Some industry representatives advocate such a selective arming as a future model, where a small, highly-trained component of some PSCs are allowed to operate a restricted armed-response capability, but recognise that this would require effective regulation and oversight. The majority of PSCs, however, show very little enthusiasm for arming guards, with many stressing that arming the sector would be extremely damaging. Instead they advocate a solution that involves closer co-operation with the police. This is also the position of both the KSIA and the PSIA.

The extent to which the proposed Private Security Regulatory Authority will be able to monitor and review PSCs remains to be seen, but the government's inconsistency in regards to the minimum wage does not give cause for optimism. More importantly, virtually all successful regulatory structures for the private security sector rely upon a high degree of industry involvement. Yet in the eyes of some industry participants, effective moves to regulate the Kenyan sector are likely to exacerbate divisions within it, whereas policies that avoid acrimony are unlikely to be effective. It will thus be very difficult for the government to institute an effective regulatory regime if deep and unresolved issues persist within the industry.

### *Security and Inequality*

Insecurity is a feature of life for almost all citizens in Kenya, but it effects people differently. Kenya is one of the ten most unequal countries in the world, and according to the government's own figures, 56 percent of the population (or 17 million people) live in poverty, while a small elite of 10 percent control 42 percent of all wealth.[12] To a significant extent, crime and insecurity follow the lines of wealth and surveys show that the feeling of insecurity varies greatly according to income; money buys security in contemporary Kenya, and poor people are more likely to be victims of crime. As the wealthy barricade themselves behind higher security walls and install increasingly advanced alarm systems, crime moves to the poorer neighbourhoods, where the 'pickings' may be less enriching, but more accessible.



[12] Government of Kenya (2003) *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007* (Nairobi), p.1; *Daily Nation* (2004) 'Our Unequal Kenya', (Nairobi: October 27), p.1.

In this setting, it is essential that the overall provision of security, both public and private, is such that it increases security for all, not just for some. In Kenya this requires careful consideration, in particular as regards co-ordination and co-operation between PSCs and the police force. Given adequate level of co-operation between public policing and private security companies, private security can act as a 'force multiplier' increasing security for all sections of society. A lack of co-ordination and co-operation, on the other hand, could result in a gradual 'privatisation' of public policing, and hence an intensification and deepening of existing inequalities.

In this sense, the issue of wages in the security sector is not merely a commercial conflict, but representative of a much broader political issue in Kenya. It links both to the question of 'who is security for?' and 'who should provide this service?' The minimum wage, if enforced, may well make private security less available to the poor (as PSIA argues), but current low wages clearly contribute to the cycle of poverty and crime by making guards more likely to become sources of insecurity rather than providers of security (as KSIA argues). Similarly, the use of public police as an integrated part of private security (and vice-versa) clearly raises difficult questions. It is easy to see this as providing yet more protection to paying clients, while removing public resources from those unable to afford private security. At the same time, public policing is desperately inadequate for these groups at the moment, and logistical co-operation between the police and the private security sector in some areas might free up public resources for deployment elsewhere. Resolving these issues and ensuring that private security resources act as a supplement to public policing are key future considerations for Kenyan society.

This report is the third in the series, and is part of *The Globalisation of Private Security* research project. The project examines the development and dynamics of the global private security sector, and the impact of private security on security provision, social cohesion and stability, and political legitimacy in the developing world, focusing on Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa. For further information, please contact Dr. Rita Abrahamsen (rra@aber.ac.uk) or Dr. Michael Williams (mjw@aber.ac.uk).

The Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth was established in 1919 and is the oldest department of its kind in the world. One of the largest Departments of international politics in Europe, it currently numbers 53 staff, with 600 undergraduate students and 150 postgraduates. The Department was awarded a top 6-star rating in the latest UK Research Assessment Exercise. Further information is available at www.aber.ac.uk/interpol.

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