

The killing fields of Baringo

By Bennadine Tiemoi

My name is Bennadine Tiemoi I am a correspondent with Royal Media services covering Baringo County, Kenya. I am contemplating resigning from journalism.

This is to bring to your attention the suffering and feeling surrounding journalists covering the volatile banditry zone of Baringo where now it has turned to be a murder zone. I have come face to face with violence in this place. The worst being current killings which might kill our profession.

Coming in contact with bloodshed in areas of Arabal, Chebinyiny, Yatya and Loruk up to now eight people have been killed in a span of four days and several injured, loss of properties more and worst is the displacement of thousands camping in schools, the suffering children undergo. They cry, they sleep in bushes starving and getting exposed to life threatening situations. It is painful, unbearable for a journalist.

Journalists from Baringo have become part of this. You are forced to cry when they cry, they get emotional and confused, we are forced to leave our paraphernalia and help them risking our lives, the bandits who view journalists with hate threaten people for covering and exposing the stories, some feel the stories we do is not to their wish but it is real. Now most journalists are very worried of their security. You don't know when it will rain on you.

Comments in social media commenting on the coverage is both positive and negative raising eyebrows. There are some places journalists are not comfortable or safe to be, especially Marigat town. There are some top security officers in Rift valley that journalists fear: either their comments or reactions.

Most of us are forced to escape and sleep outside our homes as you don't know the next target. None is safe in Baringo, some warrants of arrest have been leaked. You live a worried life for giving what is real situation on the ground with pictures and sound bytes you are targeted.

Imagine a society where gunfire exchange renders the air close to 30 minutes or one hour continuously, police, heavy security teams engaging hundreds of heavily daring armed bandits who are young and well equipped in arms and good knowledge on the terrain who overpower the security officer in several occasions. Journalists mentioning that the officers were overpowered have trouble sleeping.

My heart is broken coming in contact with dead bodies, considering a flash back of two years ago. I remember the killings in Eastpokot when the two communities turkana and pokot rustlers engaged killing over 50 people killed all their bodies lying and being feasted on by vultures and hyenas. Nothing was done by the government, recall the Kapedo massacre over the brutal murder of security officers by the pokot armed bandits. It's as fresh as yesterday. I am traumatized, so are my colleagues in the field. We leave it to God, it is unbearable, but we keep working.