

SABA SABA

Saba Saba (Seven Seven in Swahili) refers to the date of July 7. In Tanzania, the date refers to the the founding of the Tanganyika African National Union on July 7, 1954. But in Kenya, the date refers to the year 1990 and pro-democracy demonstrations held throughout the country. The phrase, Saba Saba, is so powerful that President Moi had prohibited its very use.

The demonstrations resulted in violence and criminal actions against participants by the current Kenyan President, Daniel Moi. The demonstrations were sparked by the detention of two cabinet ministers without trial. The cabinet ministers were released although it took over a year for their release. Even the church in Kenya ascribed the rebellion to national poverty and limited political participation of the people. The demonstrations also called for the restoration of the multiparty system after leaders had called for it in May 1990.

The demonstrations were opposed by President Moi who feared a multiparty system fearing violence because of the many tribal divisions in Kenya. President Moi used paramilitary troops to disperse the demonstration.

History repeated itself in Kenya on July 7, 1997 when thirteen were killed as tensions mounted in anticipation of December elections. Police raided universities and an Anglican cathedral.

The demonstrations also gave rise to the FORD party (Forum for the Restoration of Democracy). The current leader of the opposition, Raila Odinga, was one of the original members of the FORD party. On July 7, 2014, Raila Odinga held a peaceful protest in Uhuru Park in Nairobi, Kenya. The Kenyan government dispatched 15,000 police and military personnel to the site. Peace prevailed as the opposition discussed lack of political relevance, inflation and other issues facing Kenyans.

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Primary Sources:

- <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-58026/saba-saba-heroes-who-widened-democratic-space-kenya#sthash.B2liRKU9.dpuf>

Secondary Sources:

- [Angelique Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya* \(Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995\), 23.](#)
- [Richard Trillo, *Kenya* \(Rough Guides, 2002\), 110.](#)

OBSCURE HISTORIES