

Mediterranean Review



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This document provides an overview of developments in the Mediterranean Basin and other regions of interest from 05 – 18 March 2013, with hyperlinks to source material highlighted and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to the region, please contact the members of the Med Basin Team, or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.



In Focus: 2013 Kenyan Election Results: Moving Forward **By Foard Copeland**

On 04 March 2013, Kenya held its first [general elections](#) under the new constitution; by 09 March, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) [announced](#) Uhuru Kenyatta had won 50.07 per cent of the ballots cast. Prior to the elections, analysts [predicted](#) a runoff but Kenyatta captured more than half of the popular vote by approximately 8,000 ballots, thus [avoiding](#) a second round. International election monitors called the results [largely credible](#). However, rival candidate Raila Odinga [challenged](#) the results in court. Odinga won 43 per cent of the popular vote. The Supreme Court will hear the case and [deliver](#) a ruling by 01 April 2013.

President Kenyatta

Born to Jomo Kenyatta, the founding father of Kenya's post-Independence democracy, the younger Kenyatta, 51, [boasts](#) one of the largest fortunes on the African continent. Educated at Amherst College in Massachusetts, Kenyatta returned to Kenya and began a horticulture business using the 500,000 acres inherited from his father. In 1999, he began his career in the civil service under former President Daniel Moi (1978-2002) and subsequently served as a Member of Parliament, Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister. Speaking before a large crowd after the IEBC announced election results on 09 March, Kenyatta thanked supporters and [congratulated](#) Kenyans for conducting peaceful elections: "My fellow Kenyans today, we celebrate the triumph of democracy; the triumph of peace; the triumph of nationhood. Despite the misgivings of many in the world - we demonstrated a level of political maturity that surpassed expectations".

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North Africa

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Algeria

Approximately 10,000 people gathered on 14 March in the town of Ouargla, in central Algeria, to [protest](#) government corruption and lack of jobs, reports *Al Jazeera*. Protesters complained that the government was marginalising the southern and central regions, although the region hosts all of the gas and oil facilities in Algeria. Despite the developing oil industry in the town of Ouargla, many people are still unemployed. Protesters chanted anti-government and anti-corruption slogans and called for job creation and regional development; however the demonstrations were “strictly social” and did seek to disrupt the government. The demonstrations came three days after a government announcement to implement “[new procedures](#) in the near future”, reports *Al Monitor*. The announcement followed an emergency meeting headed by the Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal. During his meeting, Sellal told the elders from the southern region that the new procedures will give officials in southern towns the responsibility to appoint their staff. In return, Sellal reportedly asked the elders to “help to pacify the situation until the new procedures go into effect”.

Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

Egypt

An Egyptian court suspended [parliamentary elections](#) scheduled to begin in April, pushing the country into further political chaos, informs the *Associated Press* (*AP*). The court ruled on 06 March that the Islamist-dominated parliament had improperly pushed through a law organising the elections without proper judicial review. The presiding judge, Abdel-Meguid el-Muganen, ordered the Supreme Constitutional Court to review the law to ensure it conforms to Egypt’s newly-adopted constitution and annulled the presidential decree calling for elections.

The European Union (EU) parliament will [withhold](#) a EUR 5 billion (USD 6.5 million) aid package to Egypt promised in [November 2012](#) if the government does not make improvements in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, reports *Ahram Online*. Additionally, the EU will condition its release of aid on Egypt’s progress in promoting civil society, women’s and [minority rights](#). The EU further called on Egypt to commute [Port Said death sentences](#) issued on 26 January 2013 to 21 football fans indicted in the 2012 stadium riot. In an effort to ease Egypt’s worsening economic crisis, International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials travelled to Cairo on 17 March to [restart negotiations](#) on the delayed USD 4.8 billion loan, reports *Bloomberg*. Masood Ahmed, the head of the Middle East and Central Asia department at the Washington-based lender met with [Egyptian Prime Minister](#) Hashim Kandil; however, according to *Reuters*, the meeting produced nothing more than an agreement that an IMF technical team will soon travel to Egypt, according to government spokesman Alaa El-Hadidi.

The Egyptian Coalition on Children’s Rights condemned the Egyptian government for arresting and detaining unprecedented numbers of children. The group reports that the interior ministry has detained [383 children](#) arrested during protests since 25 January 2013, according to *Ahram Online*. Many rights activists have warned of increasing child detentions in 2013 and increasing numbers of rights violations against minors. *Global Post* writes that Egypt continues to face numerous [security-related challenges](#). In early March, riot police and regular officers initiated a near nationwide strike in protest of what they refer to as “near intolerable working conditions” and the use of the police as “pawns” in the government’s on-going feud with the political opposition. On 10 March, the Attorney General sparked controversy after [encouraging citizen arrests](#), generating calls for “popular committees” or militias, and private security companies to assume law enforcement duties in the interim, reports *AP*. On 17 March, a crowd of vigilantes [beat and hanged](#) two men accused of attempting to steal a vehicle, according to *AP*. The lynching took place in the town of Samanod, located north of Cairo, where a crowd of over 3,000 people, including women and children, watched as the mob killed the two men and then dragged the bodies to the local police station.

Libya

Libya, where the sale and consumption of alcohol is banned, is facing widespread incidents of [alcohol poisoning](#), reports *Sky News*. The cases of poisoning from the homebrewed “boukha” beverage, sold on the black market, reportedly overstretched hospitals in the capital Tripoli. Health Minister Nurideen Doghman said that the beverages were mixed with poisonous methanol. The latest reports indicate that the [death toll](#) from methanol poisoning has risen to 87. Doghman says the beverages have harmed a total of 1,044 people, including blinding fifteen and many others are in comas or suffering kidney failure.

A vehicle transporting Libya's interim leader Mohammed Magarief [came under fire](#) on 05 March, following a General National Congress (GNC) meeting, which was disrupted by a group of protesters demanding that legislators pass a bill banning the associates of former leader Moammar Gaddafi from political positions, reports *Al Jazeera*. Interior Minister Fawzi Taher Ahmed Abdallah said on the following day that gunmen among the protesters fired upon Magarief's car; however, according to the official news agency *LANA*, it is unclear whether it was an assassination attempt or a collateral incident. Approximately 300 protesters tried "to put pressure on members to vote on this bill" according to the Prime Minister Ali Zeidan. Proposed in December 2012, the bill is controversial as it could remove approximately thirty GNC members from office, including Zeidan and Magarief.

An oil pipeline belonging to Waha Oil Co. in Libya was [shut down](#) on 18 March as a result of an on-going strike at its Gialo oil field, reports *Bloomberg*. The strike caused a loss of 120,000 barrels per day in Libya's crude oil output. The country is trying to increase its oil output and attract foreign investments; however, it has been dealing with several strikes and armed clashes disrupting the oil sector since the country's revolution two years ago. Truck drivers carrying jet fuel to Benina Airport in Benghazi are also on a strike, forcing the government to transport fuel from Tripoli at a higher cost to ensure airport operations, according to Minister of Oil Abdulbari al-Arusi. Libya's Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said halting oil production is a "crime punishable by law".

Morocco

Morocco and Senegal signed [two agreements](#) on 16 March for bilateral cooperation: one dealing with international road transport of people and goods and another one for cooperation in the sectors of mining, hydrocarbon, electricity and renewable energy, reports *Middle East Online*. Moroccan Minister of Energy Fouad Douiri said "Morocco is willing to assist Senegal in the electrification field, especially through the construction of energy infrastructure. In the mining sector, Senegal has huge potentialities, which need improvement in their exploitation; this is the case of the phosphates. The present agreement will serve as a platform for Moroccan companies to grow in Senegal, notably the Moroccan Hydrocarbon Office, which will carry out exploration activities". The agreements fall within the framework of Moroccan King Mohammed VI's official Africa tour, which will take him to Ivory Coast and Gabon after a visit to Senegal. The Head of the Civic Committee for Africa, Gustave Osah, emphasised that the King is leading a [South-South](#) "development initiative" with these official visits.

A year after the suicide of a sixteen-year-old Moroccan girl forced to marry her rapist, the Kingdom's parliament pledged to change its controversial [rape law](#), reports *Mail and Guardian*. The Islamist government in the country will amend the law that allows those who rape minors to escape imprisonment on the condition of marrying their victims. Justice Minister Mustapha Ramid expressed support for the amendment and referred to punishments up to thirty years in jail for rape. Rachida Tahri, a Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) member and former president of the Women's Democratic Association of Morocco moves to ban child marriage as a whole. The number of child marriages rose from 30,000 to 35,000 between 2008 and 2010, according to official figures. Judges often waive the family code of Morocco, which sets eighteen as the minimum marriage age. The ruling Justice and Development Party agree to amend the minimum age to sixteen while women's rights advocates seek an outright ban on child marriage.

Tunisia

Thousands of Tunisians gathered in the capital Tunis [demanding an end](#) to Islamist governmental rule which is blamed for the assassination of secular opposition figure Chokri Belaid, reports *RT*. Due to public reaction to Belaid's assassination, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali's resigned. His replacement, Ali Larayedh, formed a new coalition government with independents in key ministries in an attempt to appease the protesters. The protests did not interrupt Ennahda chairman, Rachid Gannouchi, from holding talks with a visiting European Union (EU) delegation. Price increases on commodities (fuel, alcohol and milk) and a 1 per cent levy on monthly salaries over 1,700 dinars (USD 1,075) have drawn public criticism in the country. The Tunisian Organization for Consumer Protection called for a protest on 15 March against the fuel price hike and rising inflation. Meanwhile, on 18 March, taxi drivers demonstrated to protest high fuel prices. Gasoline station owners called for a three-day demonstration in April; high fuel prices encourage the sale of gasoline smuggled from Libya. The recently-formed coalition cabinet will only serve until the elections later this year and thus, is expected to back down, at least partially, on the economic reforms. However, so far, the government appears determined to proceed with them.

Have a question on North Africa, Northeast Africa or the Horn of Africa?
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We look forward to hearing from you!



Northeast Africa

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Cross Border Issues between South Sudan and Sudan

South Sudan and Sudan agreed to withdraw their troops from the fourteen-mile wide [demilitarised zone](#) on 08 March, informs *CNN*. After months of stalemate, former South African President Thabo Mbeki successfully negotiated the terms of the demilitarised zone. Failed attempts at reaching an agreement led to the cessation of oil production and export from South Sudan to Sudan, which crippled the economies of both countries. Sudan's Minister of Defence, Lieutenant General Abdal-Rahim Mohamed Hussein stated: "We will be...committed, definitely, to implement (the agreement) word-by-word and step-by-step". South Sudan's Minister of Defence, John Koang Nyoun, promised that his country's forces would pull out of the "14 miles and other areas". On 17 March, Lieutenant General Emad Adawi, a member of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), confirmed that both Sudan and South Sudan had [withdrawn their troops](#) from the disputed border areas, reports *Sudan Tribune*. A joint monitoring force composed of ninety monitors from each country and a protection battalion of 860 Ethiopian troops from the United Nations Interim Security Force (UNISFA) were to patrol the border to verify the movement of troops from both sides. However, after troop withdrawals on 17 March, South Sudan accused Sudan of launching a [ground attack](#) in the South Sudanese state of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, informs *Sudan Tribune*. The attack by Sudanese armed forces, allied militia groups and armed Arab tribes left one civilian dead and several others wounded. The raid also prompted local residents to flee the area. South Sudanese division commander Major General Santino Deng Wol confirmed the incident. Maj-Gen Wol said the army remains committed to respecting the decision of the Southern government to pull its troops from the disputed border, but did not say whether the army would retaliate.

Both countries also reached a crucial agreement on 12 March under the supervision of the African Union to [resume oil exports](#), reports *The New York Times (NYT)*. South Sudan, which relies on oil for 98 per cent of its economy, stated that oil production will resume "as soon as possible", according to Stephen Dhieu Dau, the country's Minister of Petroleum and Mining. The two sides did not reach a final agreement on the disputed district of Abyei, but did confirm a timeline to establish an administration council and a security council in the district.

South Sudan

The South Sudanese government signed an agreement with [Ethiopia and Djibouti](#) on 12 March allowing South Sudan to export its oil by truck through the two countries starting in July 2013, reports *Bloomberg*. South Sudan's Deputy Minister of Petroleum said the agreement foresees the exportation of oil vis-à-vis the Red Sea port of Douraleh in Djibouti, saying "We need to wait for a technical assessment to be done first, but Ethiopia and Djibouti agreed for the oil to be exported by trucks through their countries". Results of the technical assessment determining the suitability of the countries' roads are expected within four months. South Sudan sees the use of trucks for oil transport as a short-term solution while it considers the construction of two oil pipelines in the region – one through Ethiopia and the other through Kenya to the port of Lamu – as an alternative to exporting oil through Sudan.

Heavy fighting in Unity state, close to the border with Sudan, forced hundreds of [Sudanese refugees](#) to flee the Yida refugee camp on 17 March, reports *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*. Over 600 women and children sought safety in two nearby compounds. It remains unclear which groups participated in the clashes, but the area is renowned for the presence of several armed groups who have infiltrated the border refugee camps, including Yida. The fighting killed at least one policeman and wounded several others. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) voiced "serious concerns" over the existence of armed groups within border refugee camps.

UNHCR announced on 14 March that it will resettle approximately 16,000 South Sudanese refugees to [Pugnido camp](#) in the region of Gambella in Ethiopia, informs *Sudan Tribune*. The refugees have been stranded for over a year living within Ethiopian border villages. Thousands more South Sudanese fled to the Ethiopian border areas to escape a rebellion and inter-ethnic violence in Jonglei state. UNHCR reports as many as twenty South Sudanese refugees cross the border into Ethiopia on a daily basis.

Sudan

The United Nations (UN) announced on 14 March a requirement of [USD 1 billion](#) in funding to finance over 350 projects in Sudan, reports *Sudan Tribune*. The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ali al-Zaatari, stated that 3.4 million people require immediate assistance; many are South Sudanese stranded at the border in the North. The UN faces constant challenges in assisting one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps and continued conflict in Darfur and South Kordofan affects large segments of the local population. The UN estimates that tens of thousands have fled areas in Darfur following clashes between rebels and government troops that erupted in late December.

The United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur ([UNAMID](#)) overhauled its protection strategy for civilians in the troubled region of Darfur, reports *Sudan Tribune*. UNAMID's Acting Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, Aichatou Mindaoudou, said the new strategy is necessary given the increased number and severity of violent attacks in Darfur over the past year. The most recent crisis broke out in early January when fighting between two local tribes over a gold mine displaced at least 70,000. Mindaoudou said the new strategy utilises a more effective early warning system and a rapid response mechanism to assist populations in danger and will allow UNAMID to respond to crises in "a more coordinated, harmonised and comprehensive manner".



Horn of Africa

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Djibouti

The government of Djibouti [threw out](#) a legal challenge to February's parliamentary elections, reports *Reuters*. The Constitutional Council rejected a complaint filed by the opposition party Union for National Salvation (USN), stating that it was submitted one day after the deadline. The decision ensures President Ismail Omar Guellah retains power over the national assembly, an authority he has exercised since ascending to his position in 1999. Abdourahman Mohamed Guelleh, the mayor of Djibouti City and a leading opposition figure, said, "What's essential is that Djiboutians know the victory belonged to USN".

Eritrea

The Israeli government [continues](#) a policy of indefinitely retaining Eritrean refugees while attempting to coerce them into signing "voluntary repatriation" agreements, reports *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*. Under the current system, refugees [jailed](#) in the Sahorinim prison in Southern Negev district are instructed to sign papers that request the Israeli government to arrange for their return to either Eritrea or "a third country" (usually Uganda). Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), like [Hotline for Migrant Workers](#), describe the dismal conditions for Eritrean refugees in Israel, many face torture, abuse and grave [dangers](#) if they are deported to Eritrea. Despite being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Israel denies Eritreans refugee status. The representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Israel [censured](#) the policy in late February, stating there was "nothing voluntary" about the process, which included detention and threats of long-term imprisonment. On 05 March, the Israeli Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein [ordered](#) that the Interior Ministry cease Eritrean deportations, a reform that the *Ethiopian Review* says is [unlikely to be enacted](#).

Ethiopia

A minor row [erupted](#) between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia in February, reports *All Africa*. At the Arab Water Conference held in Cairo in February, the Saudi Deputy Defence Minister, Prince Khalid bin Sultan, accused the Ethiopian government of constructing a dam along the Blue Nile River that threatens the national security of Egypt and Sudan. "The establishment of the dam 12 kilometres from the Sudanese border is for political plotting rather than for economic gain and constitutes a threat to Egyptian and Sudanese national security", he remarked. Ethiopia's government [expressed](#) "outrage" over the comments and summoned the Saudi Ambassador to Ethiopia. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, then raised the issue with Saudi Arabia's visiting Finance Minister, Ibrahim Abdulaziz Al-Assaf. The dispute arose over the USD 4.8 billion [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam](#) that began construction in 2011 with expected completion in 2015. On 11 March, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud al-Faisal, [released](#) a conciliatory statement.

In domestic news, Ethiopian officials [arrested](#) 43 opposition figures on 17 March, reports the *Awramba Times*. According to witnesses, one of those arrested was Dr. Yacob Hailermariam, former Senior Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. *Al Jazeera* cited another example of government efforts to stifle opposition and media on 18 March in a published article stating that the Ethiopian government had [blocked](#) its website. Google Analytics data showed that *Al Jazeera* site hits plummeted from 50,000 per month to 114.

Kenya

On 16 March, Raila Odinga [filed a petition](#) at the Supreme Court, challenging the 04 March election results, reports *Reuters*. Odinga lost by a margin of 50.07 to 43 per cent to his contender, Uhuru Kenyatta, in polls deemed to be largely [credible](#), according to [preliminary assessments](#) from the European Union, the African Union Observer Missions, and the Carter Center. Odinga's petition accused the electoral board of "criminal neglect", stating that its methods lacked transparency and that electronic polling stations failed to function properly. According to *The Guardian*, tensions escalated when several hundred supporters of Odinga gathered in front of the Supreme Court on 16 March. Police riot gear [fired shots](#) into the air and lobbed tear gas at protestors. The Court has fourteen days to [deliver](#) its ruling.

Lawyers for Uhuru Kenyatta will press the International Criminal Court (ICC) to [drop charges](#) against the president-elect at a pre-trial hearing scheduled for 23 March, informs *Al Jazeera*. According to individuals familiar with the case, the decision to push for the dismissal came after ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda dropped charges against a co-accused of Kenyatta, Francis Muthaura, when a key witness [recanted](#) his testimony. "The collapse of the case against Muthaura has a profound impact on the viability of the prosecution's case against Kenyatta", said a lawyer for Kenyatta.

Please visit the CFC [Kenya election page](#) for live coverage and social media exchange on the 2013 elections results

Somalia

Rebel group al Shabaab, [detonated](#) a suicide bomb in Mogadishu on 18 March killing at least ten people. This detonation ignited fears that the group might return to prominence with the ability to carry out catastrophic terrorist strikes. The target of the attack, a top intelligence official, sustained injuries but survived the attack. In other related news, al Shabaab [retook](#) the town of Hudur in southern Somalia, its first territorial grab in months, according to *Middle East Online*. Ethiopian peacekeepers withdrew from the town; however residents now reported an armed group has taken control of the town. Mogadishu residents remain concerned about a sequence of [homicides](#) in the past two weeks, according to *All Africa*.

On 07 March, the United Nations Security Council [partially lifted](#) its arms embargo, reports *Al Jazeera*. The arms agreement was introduced in 1992 when the country was overrun by warlords. The partial removal of the embargo is widely regarded as an indicator that security is expected to remain strong in the coming months. The UK drafted resolution also renewed the on-going peace-keeping operation in the country otherwise referred to as the African Union Mission in Somalia ([AMISOM](#)). Surface-to-air missiles, large-calibre guns, howitzers, cannons and mortars as well as anti-tank guided weapons, mines and night vision weapon sights remain banned while automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades are permitted. The government must report weapons sales and purchases within five days of the transactions. Amnesty International protested that the Security Council should keep the weapons ban in place. On 16 March, *All Africa* reported that weapons caches were [systematically stolen](#) from the Villa Somalia, the country's presidential compound, raising concerns about the recent changes to the arms embargo.

Continued from page 1

However, Kenyatta's election is not without controversy. His vast family wealth is often criticised by the Kenyan press. Opponents point to [backroom deals](#) by Jomo Kenyatta that secured enormous land assets and consolidated power for the Kenyatta family at the expense of working class citizens. Additionally, his campaign has been marred by scandal since the International Criminal Court (ICC) [indicted](#) Kenyatta and fellow running-mate, William Ruto, for crimes against humanity. On 18 March, Kenyatta urged the ICC to [dismiss the charges](#), citing the international court's recent decision to drop charges against Francis Mathaura after a key witness [recanted](#) his testimony. Unless cases are postponed or dismissed, the trial for vice-president-elect William Ruto will commence on 28 May, followed by Kenyatta's trial on 09 July.

Odinga Challenges Results in Court

[Filing](#) a petition with the Kenyan Supreme Court on 16 March 2013, Raila Odinga officially challenged the presidential election results. The Court must [deliver](#) a ruling within fourteen days; a verdict is expected by 01 April. Odinga is represented by William Burck, the [former attorney](#) for US president George W. Bush. Over twenty experts comprise Odinga's legal team. Arguments will focus on exposing what Odinga alleges to be "rampant illegalities" regarding rosters of eligible voters and biometric data used to verify voters. "The prime minister wants a whole new election", Burck told reporters on 15 March. Most observers agree that a biometric identification system failed and that electronic transmission of results slowed the process of finalising the vote. However, the IEBC [insists](#) that neither issue compromised the integrity of the election or the Commission's ability to deliver impartial results. According to Kennedy Masime of the Elections Observation Group, "From a technical point of view we lost efficiency, but that does not render the elections un-credible".

Both men articulated intentions to [adhere](#) to the Supreme Court's decision. "I have repeatedly indicated my commitment to respect and abide by the Supreme Court ruling. I invite my brother, honourable Uhuru Kenyatta to publicly do the same", said Odinga. The Jubilee coalition affirmed that Kenyatta would similarly support the Court's findings. The Kenyan Supreme Court currently consists of only [six justices](#), as its seventh appointee awaits confirmation. The make-up of the bench renders possible a 3-3 split among the justices and two likely outcomes. In the first, Kenyatta will remain the election's winner, according to Chair of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), Eric Matua. Under this scenario, the status quo initially announced by the IEBC will remain, as prescribed by Kenyan law. However, Chief Justice Willy Mutunga can re-constitute the bench so that five judges hear the case; a move Matua believes would be controversial. "The ideal situation would have been to have an uneven number of judges sit, but there will be questions asked if the Chief Justice uses powers granted to him in law to compose a bench", said Matua. Chief Justice Mutunga received [death threats](#) prior to the elections from [gangs](#) claiming to have participated in violence following the 2007 elections. Mutunga promised to remain impartial and encouraged live media coverage of the legal proceedings.

International Response

A host of African leaders congratulated Kenyatta and the broader electorate. From [Ethiopia](#) to [Uganda](#), leaders and governments lauded the success of the elections. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni wrote a congratulatory message to Kenyatta and paid tribute to Kenyan voters; "Their conduct has redeemed the honour of Kenya and Africa". Botswana [reversed](#) a prior decision that [barred](#) Kenyatta from entering the country. On 13 March, Botswana Foreign Affairs Minister, Phandu Skelemani, announced the president-elect will be more "more than free" to visit. "Botswana is cognisant of a section of the law that says one is innocent until proven guilty," he said in a statement.

Despite support from African leaders, Western officials have delivered lukewarm responses. US Secretary of State John Kerry [congratulated](#) the Kenyan people on holding peaceful elections but did not refer to Kenyatta. Similar statements were also released by [France](#), [Germany](#), [Denmark](#), and a host of other EU governments. The United Kingdom warned that it will maintain only "[essential contact](#)" with Kenyatta, implying an arrangement similar to the country's relationship with Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. However, according to some reports, Western powers will be unable to cut ties with Kenya or impose sanctions because such actions could drive Kenya - East Africa's strongest economy - to reinforce economic and political alliances with emerging powers such as India, China and Middle Eastern countries. Further, [geopolitical concerns](#) in the region pose a challenge. Efforts to isolate the Kenyan government could introduce security setbacks. Bordering both Somalia and South Sudan, Kenya also shares [regional neighbours](#) that are [closely watched](#) by US, EU and NATO allies, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen, and to an extent, Iran. The Kenyan military has been a [stabilising force](#) in Somalia and the country increasingly serves as a fulcrum for [regional stability](#) in the Horn of Africa. The US donates USD 900 million a year to Kenya for development, public health initiatives, and security programmes.

