# Protests in Nairobi over Controversial Finance Bill Spark Violent Unrest



On June 25, 2024, protests erupted in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, against a new finance bill introducing significant tax hikes, including an eco-levy on goods like sanitary products and a 16% tax on bread. These measures are part of an effort by President William Ruto to address Kenya's fiscal deficit. However, the proposed increases have led to widespread public discontent over the high cost of living and perceived governmental corruption.

The protests intensified as demonstrators stormed Parliament, setting parts of the building ablaze. Police responded with live ammunition and tear gas, resulting in at least five fatalities, as reported by the Kenya Medical Association. Prominent figures, such as Auma Obama, the half-sister of former U.S. President Barack Obama, were among those tear-gassed during the tumult.

President Ruto, who was attending an African Union retreat in Naivasha, condemned the unrest, labeling it a threat to national security and deploying the military to assist in quelling the violence. The disquiet has drawn international concern, with the U.S. Embassy and other Western diplomats issuing statements calling for restraint and dialogue.

The protests underscore the domestic challenges faced by President Ruto, even as he solidifies international relations, highlighted by the recent designation of Kenya as a major non-NATO ally by U.S. President Joe Biden.