

Troubled waters as East Africa gears for key poll

East Africa's largest economy holds its general election on 8 August, a decade after bloody post-election violence left more than 1 100 dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. **Legalbrief** reports that there are growing concerns over the voter register while the electoral commission is appealing a High Court order that would allow the reopening of bidding for printing presidential ballots a week before the general election was set to start. **Voice of America** reports that audit firm KPMG, which was hired to clean the register, found 90 000 dead voters on the rolls and another 500 000 people who used wrong or inconsistent ID numbers. The electoral body said it has removed the names of at least 88 000 dead voters from the list. **The electoral commission and the opposition have been battling in the courts on matters dealing with the High Court's cancellation of presidential ballot papers.** The court ruled the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) was required to conduct public participation in the award of the tender to Al Ghurair to print 120m ballots for the poll, in which nearly 20m Kenyans are eligible to vote. The opposition is also asking the court to rule on what means of ballot counting and transmitting the results should be used. A pre-election Economic and Fiscal Report released last week shows that up to \$499m has been allocated for the election, with \$53m going to election-related security operations. **The Nation** reports that the bulk of the money - \$429m - will go to the IEBC, with the rest being distributed to the judiciary, the National Intelligence Service and the Registrar of Political Parties.

Meanwhile, six presidential candidates have threatened to pull out of this week's television debate after labelling the structure of the debates as 'discriminatory'. This after organisers decided to have two time slots for the debates. One would pit the main contenders – President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga against each other – while the other presidential candidates would have the other time slot. In a statement, the candidates, who include Thirdway Alliance leader Ekuru Aukot and independent candidates Michael Wainaina and Japheth Kaluyu, said **they cannot take part in a debate where they have been divided into a 'two-tier' system.** 'Should you, therefore, be still committed to this discriminatory approach, the undersigned being duly cleared presidential candidates and their running mates will have no option but not to participate in what is a clearly unconstitutional, illegal and discriminatory process,' they said in a joint statement. A report on the **allAfrica** site notes that the first presidential debate scheduled for 10 July was called off after Kenyatta and Odinga both protested against the format.

A strikingly toxic campaign ad has been unleashed online in a country where politics and ethnicity are closely aligned. The **Daily Mail** reports that the 90-second video, shot in moody monochrome, presented a dystopia in which Odinga wins the August vote and plunges the nation into a violent and inept dictatorship. Under this scenario, tribes would be set against one another while terrorists run riot. 'Stop Raila, Save Kenya. The Future of Kenya is in Your Hands,' the video said. It is unclear who is behind the video, but some are blaming Cambridge Analytica (CA), a company credited with using its data mining and psychological profiling techniques to help swing recent elections in the US and UK. **'Here it can lead to war,'** said John Githongo, a veteran anti-corruption campaigner. 'The wrong video, the wrong information, it can go out of control.' Paul-Olivier Dehaye, a Swiss data activist who has studied CA's techniques, said there are very strong communities in Kenya 'and that's exactly the kind of situation present where you can start to drive different conversations about the election in different sub-communities'. According to the report, he added: 'We've seen it with Brexit and the US election, and the same can be done in Kenya, or elsewhere that there's a lot of fragmentation already.'