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**Kenya Research project by Robert M. Press [see: Press, Robert M. (2006) *Peaceful Resistance: Advancing Human Rights and Civil Liberties*. Aldershot, U. K.: Ashgate.**

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**Interview conducted by Robert M. Press ([bob.press@usm.edu](mailto:bob.press@usm.edu); [press.bob@gmail.com](mailto:press.bob@gmail.com))**

**Location of interview: telephone interview in the United States; not recorded.**

**Date of interview: around 2002.**

**Interviewee: Maina wa Kinyatti**

**Adjunct Professor Hunter College in New York; Mau Mau Research Center (Director). He was planning to start a research center in Kenya.**

**Historian; researcher on Mau Mau in Kenya; former professor at the University of Nairobi.**

**Arrested and imprisoned in 1982 in Kenya; released in 1988, for alleged plot against the state involving the underground Mwakenya movement. He was tortured while in prison.**

The following are notes taken on the main points based on the telephone interview. The questions are by Robert Press; MK is the interviewee's response. Most statements are paraphrased; a few quotes are shown.

Q 1. What were the main forces that brought about change in Kenya from 1987-2002 in terms of activists, donors, international actors?

MK The most important thing was the people of Kenya themselves who organized against the dictatorship of [Kenyan President Daniel arap] Moi and expose it internationally.

The underground movement – was able to go outside the country and expose what was happening in the country. Able to organize the people within the country. Particularly the youth.

Q2. What about human rights activists?

MK Came after struggle reached international level. Before that there was silence everywhere.

Britain and the United States were supporting the regime. Later they [activists] played a very important part in the struggle; ...and Amnesty international.

Q3. What about Individual vs. organizational activism?

.MK People of Kenya regrouped themselves: churches, lawyers, and of course individuals who helped make the statement. But the most important was the ...underground movement.

By 1992, the liberal forces in Kenya, lawyers, churches, some politicians came out to oppose the dictatorship.

Q 4. Were you part of the underground?

MK "I was not an individual; I was part of the collective to oppose dictatorship long before everyone else came out."

It was first called the December. 12 movement (1975-1982); later movement changed name to Mwakenya.

[Kinyatta, shortly after his release in 1988 talked at a press conference about his torture. The interviewer in this document [Robert Press] attended the press conference.

In the telephone interview he said: “I was losing my sight; I was kept in a small, dark room for so many years; and fed food half-cooked. After ’88, they were going to arrest me again, I was informed.” He left Kenya illegally, entering Tanzania. He stayed for a month in Dar es Salaam, then went on to the United States where he taught at a number of universities.

Q 5. Please explain more about the underground.

MK It was very strong. Had cells all over the country, especially Rift Valley and Central Province. The most important activity was recruitment of young people and politicizing them. The aim was to overthrow the regime and create a just society. The leadership was from the University.

He emphasized that he was part of a collective leadership.”

“I was not an individual...”

...”[T]here must be some voices to speak and we knew there would be danger. We knew they might arrest us and torture us, but silence meant accepting. We decided we would not be silent.”

Q 6 What was your motivation?

MK Patriotism; love for our country. An underground movement is always small..

”The movement is still there.” [this interview was conducted in 2002]

.....”We started small....” He said it began with a few dozen people.

The movement’s main goals: “civil rights, human rights...there was nothing. We saw a very strong foreign domination in our country. The government was neo-colonial.”

“There was a lot of fear...nobody could say anything. We went underground because of that...”

“Outside K the regime was seen as democratic”

“The students played a very important part...before we went underground...”

1975-1987: “only very few of us who continued to distribute leaflet st to encourage opposition. We couldn’t get lawyers...”

S.M. Otieno – took his case (not good); Kiraitu Murungi and Gibson Kamau Kuria were the only attorneys [that he mentioned] who came out to defend political prisoners in Kenya. [Note: there were a few others.]

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