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By Tom Odula

Dozens of Kenyan lawyers protest what they say is judicial interference by President Ruto

Десятки кенійських адвокатів протестують проти того, що, на їхню думку, є судовим втручанням президента В. Руту

Кенійські юристи провели мирну демонстрацію в Найробі проти того, що вони назвали судовим втручанням президента Вільяма Руту, який заявив, що не виконуватиме ухвали судів від нібито корумпованих суддів, які блокують його ключові проекти розвитку. Останніми днями В. Руту також неодноразово погрожував усунути суддів, яких він звинувачує в об'єднанні з його політичними конкурентами, щоб зірвати його спроби вирішити проблему безробіття в Кенії та забезпечити доступне житло і загальне медичне обслуговування. Але глава держави не надав жодних доказів на підтвердження своїх заяв про корумпованість суддів. Проекти В. Руту стали непопулярними частково через те, що уряд стягує більше податків для їх фінансування в той час, коли кенійці відчують зростання вартості життя. Підвищення податків на пальне, яке, на думку В. Руту, необхідне для того, щоб країна виплатила державний борг, було особливо болючим.

<https://apnews.com/article/kenya-ruto-lawyers-protest-taxes-cfc0d8e37c911ae79603c63a30e0d528>



NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Kenyan lawyers Friday demonstrated peacefully in Nairobi against what they say is judicial interference by [President William Ruto](#), who has said he will disregard court orders from allegedly corrupt judges blocking his key development projects.

In recent days, Ruto has also repeatedly threatened to remove judges he accuses of teaming up with his political rivals to frustrate his attempts to address unemployment in [Kenya](#) and provide affordable housing and universal health care. But the head of state has not produced any evidence to back his claims that some judges are corrupt.

”As lawyers we will stand firm to tell the president that you are not above the law, you must respect the law,” said lawyer Peter Wanyama, who was among some 200 lawyers who staged the march, blowing whistles and waving placards through the streets and ending up in the office of the president.

Ruto's projects have become unpopular partly due to the fact the government is [levying more taxes to fund them](#) at a time when Kenyans are experiencing increases in the cost of living. An increase in fuel taxes that Ruto says is necessary for the country not to default on paying public debt has been particularly painful.

"We want to tell parliament, the speaker and leader of majority that you can't pass unconstitutional laws that burden Kenyans and then you want the judiciary to protect it," Wanyama said.

The High Court ruled that a housing fund meant to finance the building of 200,000 affordable homes a year is unconstitutional and stopped the government from charging 1.5% from each salaried worker to fund it.

The courts have also put on hold the Social Health Insurance Act the government planned to fund by taxing salaried employees 2.75%.

Ramadhan Abubakar, vice president of the East Africa Law Society, said Ruto's remarks about the credibility of judges have the unintended consequence of eroding confidence in the judicial system.

On Wednesday, Ruto said that the previous regime of Uhuru Kenyatta, had a budget for bribing judges and that his government will not spend a single cent bribing judges.

The Law Society of Kenya has told Ruto to provide evidence of corruption on judges and use proper channels in removing them from office.

Since the institution of the 2010 Constitution, which strengthened its independence, the Kenyan judiciary has restored a lot of the public trust it had lost in successive governments since independence in 1963. Since 2010, the courts have settled disputes in three general elections. That reduced tensions and averted election violence similar to that which left more than 1,100 dead and displaced about 600,000 from their homes in 2007.

Ruto was elected last year after campaigning on a promise to respect the independence of the judiciary, unlike his predecessor Kenyatta, who reduced the institution's budget and refused to swear-in judges after the Supreme Court nullified his re-election in 2017.

Associated Press videojournalist Zelipha Kirobi contributed to this report.