

***NAIROBI, Kenya, September 19 (Infosplusgabon) - Kenya's Chief Justice David Maraga vowed on Tuesday to defend the independence of the courts and the judicial arm of the government as protestors threatened to storm the Supreme Court complex in the capital, Nairobi.***

Police fired teargas to disperse the protestors who also gathered in towns and centres in central Kenya, to support President Uhuru Kenyatta, whose election was nullified on 1 September, over irregularities in the vote.

A day before Supreme Court judges were due to issue a comprehensive ruling, explaining the grounds for nullifying the presidential victory declared by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), which employs judges, called for an end to attacks against the judges and court workers.

"We call upon Kenyans of goodwill to stand up for the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. On our part, we are prepared to pay the ultimate price to protect the constitution and the rule of law," Justice Maraga said Tuesday during a news conference at the Supreme Court.

The Court will issue its comprehensive ruling on its annulment of the 8 August elections on Wednesday.

On 1 September, the Supreme Court ruled the IEBC failed and neglected its duty to conduct the Presidential election in a manner consistent with the constitution.

The Court reached the decision on majority, with a minority of two judges opposing the decision. The two dissenting judges issued brief explanations on their opposition to the annulment of the vote.

Protests by pro-Kenyatta supporters were reported in Nairobi and the central Kenyan regions of Thika, Limuru, Kiambu, Naivasha and Nakuru, 160 km outside Nairobi.

The Chief Justice said since the ruling which annulled the presidential vote, the Court was increasingly under severe attacks from various groups making demands and interfering with the work of the court.

In Kirinyaga, entral Kenya, the Chief Justice said protestors blocked former justice minister Martha Karua, who lost the gubernatorial race for the region on 8 Aug. to hear her petition.

“This amounts to intimidation of petitioners and should never be allowed to happen,” Maraga said.

He said the judges of the Supreme Court have been negatively profiled, threatened and attacked with President Kenyatta threatening to cut the judiciary to size and teach judges lessons.

“We unreservedly condemn these mindless acts of aggression against the judiciary and reiterate that if anything happens to the individual judges, staff and their families, those making inciting statements will be personally held responsible,” Maraga said.

The Chief Justice said senior politicians including President Kenyatta, should call for a referendum to disband the judiciary, rather than issue threats against judges.

In response to the intensified attacks, the Chief Justice said the judiciary would not be subject to directions of parliament and the executive arms of government and would not be compelled to

act in a manner to guarantee particular outcomes to any individuals.

“The judiciary is an arm of the Government equal to the Executive and the Legislature. If leaders are tired of having a strong and independent judiciary, they should call a referendum and abolish it altogether. Before that happens, the judiciary would continue to discharge its mandate in accordance with the constitution and the individual oath of office,” Maraga said.

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