

1935

KENYA

1935

38168

38168

C0533/460

Murders by Natives in the Laikipia & North Nyeri districts,  
& insubordination of the Samburu tribe.

Previous

Subsequent

pp. 6

see 384 27/39

Rev. 308

9

299

10/8

297

15/10

309

21/2/36

D. Pardon

27-

297

Parliamentary question by Sir Gifford Ho - No 1 on P.Q. file

b.s.  
Native  
Sunder

DL

2

D.V. in any case. 20 Oct.

Proctor  
7/8/35

By Air Mail  
15/8/35

To Kemp 602 — cons 24/10  
10 AUG 1935  
(w/c question 1 on P.Q. file)

DESTROYED UNDER STATUTE

gm

2. Gov. Byrne - No. 524 — S. 10.35

(Reports conditions under which some 28 murders  
were committed during 1928-34 in the districts  
concerned indicate measures taken to improve the  
situation.)

See a (main) file

Proctor  
16/10

gm

AIR MAIL

KENYA

No. 524



2768 2  
3  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
NAIROBI  
KENYA  
October 1935.



Sir,

I have the honour to refer to your despatch

(1) No. 602 of the 10th August 1935, on the subject of a Question to be asked in the House of Commons in connection with certain murders by natives in the Laikipia and North Nyeri Districts of this Colony, concerning which I make the following observations.

2. It is a fact that some twenty-eight murders were committed during the years 1928-1934 in the Laikipia and North Nyeri Districts, in connection with which four convictions were recorded, and twelve Samburu were prosecuted but acquitted. Of the murders in which there were no prosecutions or convictions, fourteen Samburu were suspected of having committed murders during the period of seven years. The original figure of thirty-three murders which was given in the reply to a question in Legislative Council on the 8th July 1935 - (vide page 219 of Uncorrected Proofs, Legislative Council Debates for July 8th to July 11th 1935), was obtained by telegraph and included murders in which tribes other than Samburu were concerned.

2/2802/p/p  
(6/209-11/10)

3. The Samburu are of Niloto-Hamitic origin, closely akin to the Masai, and similar to them in language, customs and habits. They own about 252,000 head ...

THE RT. HONOURABLE  
MALCOLM MACDONALD, P.C., M.P.,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,  
DOWNING STREET,  
LONDON, S. W. 1.

head of cattle, and as they are bound to follow the grazing in accordance with the seasons, they are nomadic and bound to no permanent home. The area over which the tribe is scattered is 7,400 square miles in extent, separate from district headquarters which, during the period under review, were at Isiolo, by a large stretch of country to which access is very difficult owing to imperfect roads. Like all primitive Eilto-Hamitic tribes their young warriors are initiated during early manhood, and spear bleeding in order to win the admiration of the young girls, often on direct feminine instigation, has been prevalent from earliest times and is a traditional custom. It will be appreciated, therefore, that the series of murders referred to above is based on native custom, under which at certain times, murder is not regarded as a crime, but more as a duty.

4. In these circumstances, the discovery of the perpetrators of crimes which had possibly come to the knowledge of the elders of the tribe, who did the same in their youth and did not therefore report the facts to Government, and which were applauded by the young women because in their eyes the reputation of the young man was enhanced as warriors, was a matter of extreme difficulty.

5. Taking into account the difficulties of administration in this part of the Colony where the tribesmen have but little regard for the sanctity of human life, I do not consider that a total of twenty-eight murders in seven years is such as to cause undue alarm, in fact it may be thought remarkable that lawlessness was kept within such reasonable limits.

6. In expressing these views I do not in any way condemn the murders referred to, and in fact it is the policy of this Government to stamp out the system of

5  
end

spear-bleeding which is the main cause of the trouble, by every possible means. Measures recently taken to this end include a collective fine of £900 on certain Sections of the Samburu, the opening of a Government station at Maralal, the disarming of the warriors, and attempts to hasten on their marriage ceremonies. Further details of the methods adopted to ensure closer administrative control are contained in my despatch No. 108 of 24th February 1935.

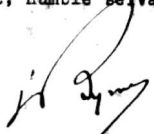
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7. As a result of these measures the situation has greatly improved, but it should be realised that several years must elapse before a really settled state of affairs can be reached.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,



BRIGADIER-GENERAL.

G O V E R N O R.