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## Profile: Kenya's secretive Mungiki sect

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**Followers of Kenya's outlawed Mungiki sect were once known**



murder and even kidnap their victims.

Media reports say the sect has evolved over the years into an organised and intimidating underworld gang with bases in Nairobi, and parts of Central and Rift Valley Provinces.

They control public transport routes and demand illegal levies from operators.

Mungiki followers reign supreme within city slums, notably Mathare in the east of the capital. Here they provide illegal water and electricity connections to hundreds of makeshift shacks.

Residents of the slums also have to pay a levy to the sect to be able to access communal toilets and for security during the night in the crime infested slums.

**Political connections**

Despite the allegations of police brutality against the Mungiki, many Kenyans feel there is a lukewarm approach in some quarters to counter activities of the sect.

During the 2008 post-election violence, the Mungiki were accused of carrying out revenge attacks after ethnic Kikuyus were killed by rival gangs.

President Mwai Kibaki is a Kikuyu and members of his community were often targeted by opposition supporters who said the election had been rigged.

There were some reports of police turning a blind eye to the activities of the Mungiki.

Its leadership has openly claimed to have two million members around the country and to have infiltrated government offices, factories, schools and the armed forces.

"Mungiki is a politically motivated gang of youths," says Ken Ouko, a sociology lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

"The religious bit is just a camouflage. It's more like an army unit. During the previous regime, they seemed to be complementary to the government. But now they seem to be antagonistic."

Mr Ouko suggests that security forces should infiltrate Mungiki to be able to counter its growing influence in Kenya.

But the sect operates in secrecy, a fact that is complicating efforts by the police to identify its members.

**a camouflage. It's more like an army unit**

Sociology lecturer Ken Ouko

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