

...that
...of the Iranian
...said Turkey would in-
tensify its contacts at all levels until a
ceasefire was reached.

...Area on Sunday killing
122 people, including 82 civilians, the
area's information minister said yes-
terday. The country has seen rising vi-
olence recently as political infighting
threatens a fragile 2018 peace deal.

he visits Washington for a meeting
with President Donald Trump, now
overshadowed by the U.S.-Israeli at-
tack that killed Iran's Supreme Leader
Ali Khamenei at the weekend.
Merz will be the first European lead-

kidnapping
Niger in 2025, compared to
years. There were 30 separate kid-
napping events affecting foreigners
by the end of November.

...ated he
...forehand at the United Nations cri-
sis meetings.

2027 polls: Ruto's UDA rules out zoning demand by ODM

The ruling UDA party, buoyed by its winning streak in the recent by-elections, now says it will field candidates in all electoral areas across the country in 2027.

BY MOSES NYAMORI
& STANLEY NGOTHO

President William Ruto's United Democratic Alliance (UDA) in Kenya has ruled out zoning in a major political blow to the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) ahead of the 2027 elections.

ODM has been pushing for zoning as part of its 2027 pre-election coalition agreement with UDA.

In the demand, ODM wants affiliate parties, including UDA, blocked from fielding candidates in its traditional bases. Zoning is a political deal where parties in a coalition opt not to field candidates in each other's strongholds.

But buoyed by its winning streak in the recent by-elections, UDA now says it will field candidates in all electoral areas across the country.

UDA National Elections Board (NEB) Chairperson Anthony Mwaura told Daily Nation that the ruling party enjoys national backing and would be fielding candidates in all areas.

Mr Mwaura said the only compromise the party can make is to have a joint nomination with ODM in areas where the two parties stand to lose if they field separately.

He said the late Prime Minister Raila Odinga—who led ODM into the current broad-based arrangement—had agreed to joint nominations in selected areas.

Mr Odinga died in October 2025.

"We have made it clear that there would be no zoning. As UDA, we will field in all areas," said Mr Mwaura.

Speaking on Saturday at Mashuru Villages in Kajiado County, President Ruto also hinted at a decision by the party not to consider zoning. He said UDA is ready to engage ODM in 'friendly fire' during the 2027 General Election as part of efforts to strengthen democracy.

"The political pact negotiations be-



President William Ruto's of United Democratic Alliance (UDA), the ruling party in Kenya. PHOTO/RUTO X HANDLE

tween UDA and ODM are at an advanced stage. The parties will enjoy a friendly fire in the next polls, but we will remain on course. Wherever either party wins, we will celebrate together. We will also accommodate losers in the government," said the President.

UDA Secretary-General Hassan Omar also recently made similar remarks, ruling out zoning in the 2027 contest.

"There is no zoning, and everyone will have to fight for themselves to win the seats. Let those with three votes bring them; those with three

hundred votes, let them bring them. You do not need to panic. Why should you be scared if this is your forte?" posed Mr Omar.

Traditional bastions

ODM insiders believe that it is only by retaining its traditional bastions that ODM would have substantive stake in the next government.

But critics of this move see it as scheme to protect some sitting MPs, seen to be loyal to the current leadership of the party. Others also see it as a plot to lock the bases from alternative political outfits.

ODM has, for successive elections, been faulted for not conducting free and fair nominations. Those appe-



RUTO'S VIEW

Last month, President William Ruto said his UDA party and the ODM will engage in what he termed a "friendly fire" during the 2027 General Election as part of efforts to strengthen democracy. The remarks suggested UDA will likely not consider zoning move.

UDA party, Democratic Action Party of Kenya (DAP-K) of former Cabinet Secretary Eugene Wamalwa, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) associated with former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i and Movement for Democracy and Growth of Ugenya MP David Ochieng' are some of the parties currently scheming to make an entry in Nyanza, Gusii, Western and Coast regions.

hensive of being shortchanged in the party primaries are already plotting to join other partner parties ahead of the next elections.

In the run up to the 2022 elections, ODM ditched out direct tickets to a majority of its sitting MPs, Senators and Governors, consequently locking out other aspirants from a competitive process.

ODM chairperson and Homa Bay Governor Gladys Wanga, Prof Anyang' Nyong'o, Fernandez Barasa (Kakamega), and Ochilo Ayacko were some of the beneficiaries of a direct ticket. Several sitting MPs also benefited.

Already, some sitting MPs are lobbying for the issuance of direct tickets. The matter was discussed during a meeting held in Karen by 40 ODM MPs on January 12. Sources in the meeting indicated how some MPs cited the need for loyalists to secure a party ticket so that they can defend the broad-based government post 2027 General Election.

ODM co-deputy party leader and Mombasa Governor Abdullswamda Nassir recently told Daily Nation that the party would demand ring-fencing of its backyards to avoid encroachment and sibling rivalry. This as he promised party members of free and fair nominations.

"We are going to negotiate well about some of these things. It would be about party position, not a view of an individual. We will definitely make sure our nominations are free and fair so that we can attract popular candidates," said Mr Nassir.

Homa Bay Town MP Peter Kaluma has in the past indicated that zoning would

be part of ODM's irreducible minimum in the party's pre-election coalition agreement with UDA. Similar demands have also been made publicly by Governor Wanga.

"The bases and strongholds of ODM must be ring-fenced and left for ODM party. So zoning is going to occur. Any breach of these pre-conditions, will collapse any negotiations," said Mr Kaluma recently. "You need numbers in terms of elected leaders as a party to have a voice both before elections and after elections. Even after elections, for you demand anything, you need numbers," he explained.

But those opposed to the demand for zoning say such an arrangement would deny the region the right leaders. There are also fears that it could lead to voter apathy, which in turn would hurt Dr Ruto's re-election, in the event ODM endorses him for a second term.

Issue direct tickets

Kibra MP Peter Orero said he supports zoning but challenged the party to ensure free and fair nominations. He also rejected any plan to issue direct tickets. He said it is only through a competitive process that the party would get popular candidates that would translate to numbers in Parliament.

"One of the conditions that even Raila talked about was the need to protect ODM zones from encroachment. We should only allow for intra-competition. This should only be applicable in areas where ODM is dominant. Areas where we are 50-50 with UDA, we can compete," said Mr Orero.

"But there must be no direct tickets where more than two people have shown interest. As a party, we have to ensure free and fair nominations."

Uriru MP Mark Nyamita—who is set to face off with Migori Governor Ochillo Ayacko in the 2027 election—said it is in the best interest of the traditional bastions to rally behind the Orange party for purposes of negotiation with President William Ruto's UDA.

He, however, called on the party leadership to ensure credible party primaries as a way of strengthening the outfit post Mr Odinga.

Mr Odinga, who died in October, was a major unifying factor in the party that has remained a major force since the 2007 General Election. The party has remained influential in Nyanza, Coast, Western and Gusii for the successive elections.

"The strength of ODM post Raila lies in conducting credible party primaries. My position is simple: ODM must conduct credible nominations in the forthcoming elections," said Mr Nyamita.

He explained that it is in the absence of a credible nomination that some party members may feel disenfranchised and seek alternative vehicles.

"It is in the absence of such credibility that some people may be forced to seek other alternatives in the pursuit of great service to our people. But we are clear that we remain united under ODM even as we engage with UDA," he explained.