

Safe Insecure

Safety means:

Being inside the house,
especially when it is locked.
Sending kids to buy things from the shop,
not going myself.
Being in the middle of this compound
– before you get to me,
you have to pass all these other houses.

[Researcher Notes: *This arrangement,
which is typical of slum areas in Nairobi,
creates a sense of anonymity
– especially for a newcomer who is not familiar with the area.
Specific locations can be difficult to find;
signs for the toilet are an exception.
People rely on knowledge acquired through living there
to find someone's house.]*

Insecurity means:

Police or strangers
coming around.
Seeing Toyota Probox
– these were used by police doing
extra-judicial killings.
Phone calls from unknown numbers.

I always look to see who it is,
when someone is knocking at the door.

Composed by Juliana Mensah from the interview transcript of a Kenyan woman human rights defender working on extra-judicial killings and gender-based violence from the research project 'Navigating Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support', which focuses on the experiences of human rights defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia (securityofdefendersproject.org)