

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES, ON THE TERRORIST ATTACK AT GARISSA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, GARISSA COUNTY, DELIVERED DURING A LIVE ADDRESS TO THE NATION AT STATE HOUSE

My Fellow Kenyans,

Our Nation is in a profound state of mourning following the heinous attack and mindless slaughter of 147 Kenyans in Garissa at Garissa University College on Thursday 2nd April 2015. It was the most lethal terrorist attack on Kenya since the 1998 US Embassy bombing. During the day-long ordeal, the terrorists took more than 800 students hostage; thankfully, more than 600 were rescued.

Our security forces responded and killed 4 of the terrorists while arresting 5. I commend the three officers who paid the ultimate price in their selfless service to Kenya.

My compatriots,

I stand before you, with profound sadness at a time of great sorrow for Kenya.

Let us take a moment to remember those who died and pray for the eternal repose of their souls. Let us also pray for those who were injured and for solace to all affected families. Today, villages and towns throughout Kenya are in mourning.

As we mourn together, and pray together for the fallen and for this our precious Republic of Kenya, I declare three days of national mourning during which our flag shall fly at half-mast.

I also want to assure the families, that government will support all possible support to the victims.

We have received many messages of condolence and strong expressions of support and goodwill from our friends and people of goodwill across the globe.

In this regard, we wish to thank our brothers and sisters from the East African Community and IGAD, the African continent, as well as global leaders including the Secretary General of the United Nations, the President of the United States of America, and His Holiness Pope Francis, amongst others. This solidarity underlines the oneness of humanity and consensus that terrorism is a global

threat requiring robust international partnerships.

To the families and friends of the survivors, and indeed all Kenyans, I want you to know that our security forces are pursuing leads on the remaining accomplices. We shall employ all means at our disposal to bring the perpetrators to justice. We are also in active pursuit of the mastermind of the attack, and have placed a reward for the information leading to his capture.

To the students who survived the attack on Garissa University College, I want you to understand our nation's deep regret that such a calamity should befall you in your formative years. However difficult, you must remain resolved to finish your studies and graduate. Because in doing so, you will demonstrate to yourselves, and to the world, that terror and evil can never prevail over the hard work and resilience that characterises the Kenyan spirit.

In the next few days, as funerals are held across the length and breadth of Kenya, we will be filled with anguish and great anger. During this holy period of Easter, the families and communities of the fallen should take solace in recalling that after the evil of the cross on Friday, and when the Devil thought he had triumphed, Sunday's hope arrived. As we remember those that fell at Garissa, we recognise that the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that the power of hatred and violence will never prevail. We shall prevail.

I urge every Kenyan, every church and every local leader to speak up for our unity and ensure that our justified anger does not spill over and lead to the victimisation of anyone. This would only play into the hands of the terrorists. Let us remain in unity as we safeguard our peace and stability.

Fellow Kenyans,

On Thursday, the Garissa University College was turned from a place of learning and hope into an arena of pain, despair and death. As a nation, we are betrayed by those who attempt to turn our diversity, our openness, and our freedom against us.

Humanity's existence is defined by the sanctity of life. By separating our children in the name of religion, before slaughtering them, the terrorists aimed to shatter this sanctity, which defines all communities and peoples globally.

I stand here today, to declare that what we have witnessed in Garissa and other parts of the world is an attack on our humanity.

These terrorists are not expressing a legitimate political aspiration; they are not killing in response to oppression or marginalisation; and they are not reflecting the tenets of faith and Godliness.

They are motivated to worship suicide and the murder of children by a tyrannical ideology that seeks to establish a Caliphate in Somalia, and the north-eastern and coastal counties of our country, and across large parts of the world.

Such an entity would then embark on the evil brutality that we see being daily perpetrated by ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and Boko Haram in West Africa.

It would offer no future except for more death and destruction, and, in this sense, the Garissa attack is aimed at humanity, at the deep common bonds of openness, respect for difference and empathy that form the global community.

My Fellow Kenyans,

We tell those who believe that a Caliphate is possible in Kenya that we are one indivisible, sovereign, and democratic state. That fact will never change.

Our forefathers bled and died for this nation and we will do everything to defend our way of life.

When I addressed Parliament on the 26th of March about the State of the Nation, I emphasised the need for a national reconciliation to allow us to move forward together as one nation. By drawing a line under a shared painful past, Kenyans should embrace a future of shared prosperity and security.

Today, however, I am saddened to stand before you after the massacre in Garissa.

It is unfortunate that a false narrative is being propagated that Kenyan Somalis and Muslims are victims of marginalisation and oppression by the rest of Kenya. Nothing could be further from the truth. They enjoy the full rights, privileges and duties of every Kenyan. In those areas that have received less recognition and support from past governments, our Constitution has made provisions

A large amount of extra financial resources and services are being provided, and Kenyan Somalis and Muslims form a vital part of our national economic and political life. We are one.

I urge all my brothers and sisters in the affected regions, and across the country, to not allow those who hide and abet the terrorists to compromise and even destroy the development that is fast growing in your area.

There is more infrastructure being built than ever before; more of your children are being enrolled in schools and colleges; more services are being delivered; and the economic transformation of the country will benefit you and your descendants, as they will all Kenyans.

The terrorists promise only death, poverty and terror; I am certain that your choice, as expressed in your determination to work with the government to defeat them, will be for development and progress.

Through the pain and anger that we are all feeling, we must come to the painful realisation that evil with its persistent desire to destroy and undermine need succeed only once for every hundred attempts that we foil. One chance is all they need to unleash their barbaric medieval slaughter upon our people and children.

Our security demands that we continue the difficult and daunting task of identifying, separating, tracking and deterring the enemy not only in Kenya but in Somalia, alongside our African and international allies. This is why I am calling on all leaders, at all levels of government, in civil society and in the political opposition to speak in a united voice that reflects the importance of sustaining this initiative. All leaders should treat national security as a subject that demands the weightiest consideration.

Fellow Kenyans,

Since independence, Kenya has embraced its diversity. Our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious character has been embraced in law and by deep tolerance among our people. It is a point of pride for our nation and a source of great strength against adversity.

I personally believe that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, tenets which the vast majority of Muslims uphold. However, the time has come for us to be honest with ourselves and each other.

The radicalisation that breeds terrorism is not conducted in the bush at night. It occurs in the full glare of day, in madrassas, in homes and in Mosques with rogue Imams. We must ask where are the religious leaders, the community leadership, and the parents and families of those who are radicalising our young people? The government must get the information and cooperation of all these parties if we are to effectively combat the terrorists.

It is a fact that our task of countering terrorism work has been made all the more difficult by the fact that the planners and financiers of this brutality are deeply embedded in our communities and were

seen as ordinary, harmless people.

We will not allow them to continue their lives as normal. The full force of the law will be brought to bear with even greater intensity than has been the case in previous years.

During the State of the Nation address, and on many occasions before then, I spoke of the pervasive threat of corruption to our aspirations as a people. What else but corruption of the worst and most criminal kind is it for Kenyans to finance, hide and recruit on behalf of Al Shabaab? There is no form of legal penalty, social shaming and Godly condemnation that they do not deserve to the fullest extent.

Fellow Kenyans,

The leadership of this nation, under my stewardship, has been in continuous deliberation to elaborate a robust framework to deal with that has become an existential threat to our Republic. I guarantee Kenyans that my administration shall respond in the severest ways possible to the Garissa attack, and any other threat to us.

Thursday wounded Kenya, Thursday wounded families, friends and the communities of the victims of the attack. Despite adversity, we have been, and will always be, unbowed and shall continue to build a strong, prosperous and secure nation. That is the greatest testimony we can offer to those precious departed we have lost.

God bless you, and God Bless Kenya.

UHURU KENYATTA, CGH

PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES