



JOINT STATEMENT BY THE WOMEN OF KENYA UNDER THE AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK (AWLN) ON A PEACEFUL KENYA.

We, the women of Kenya in our own individual capacities and collectively, acting under the auspices of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) - Kenya Chapter are appalled and concerned about the rising temperatures and increasing levels of intolerance in our country especially ignited by our political leadership. Equally disturbing is the unfortunate trend in some parts of the country where the elderly women are killed in cold blood in the guise of eliminating witches. Coming at a time when the country is getting ready for its Third General Election on the Constitution of Kenya 2010, these events are as tragic as they are regrettable.

In the last couple of weeks, Kenyans and the world at large watched in disbelief as the country's National Assembly descended into chaos as Members who are expected to uphold the highest standards of decorum exchanged bitter words and blows while considering the Coalition Bill. Kenyans, including children watched helplessly as the Lawmakers turned the Chambers into a boxing ring and a theatre of grandstanding and shouting. While this occurrence is not unique to Kenya, it is completely out of the character for a House that is expected to engage in honorable and sober debate. Furthermore, coming at a time when the country is battling with the challenge of unruly school going children who are burning their own institutions, such lack of decency by our Members of the National Assembly is sad indeed.

More recently, the country has been shocked to hear inflammatory utterances by our some of our political leaders as they woe the electorate for support. Having come so close to the brink of tipping in previous elections, Kenyans cannot afford to have our politicians employ inflammatory language or whip ethnic tensions. We remind our people that whenever political violence erupts, it is majorly the women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities among other vulnerable categories of the society who suffer the most. This recklessness must stop.

Equally disturbing are the ever increasing incidences in which innocent women especially elderly women have been lynched and murdered by members of their communities after being accused of practicing witchcraft. Statistics indicate that in Gusiiland alone, at least Six elderly women face violence with some murdered every month on suspicion of being witches. Upon being labeled as witches, these women are isolated and become easy prey and it is only a matter of time before these victims are lynched and murdered after which their land is often taken by the accusers. To imagine that such barbaric acts are happening in 2022 is indeed a tragedy of unimaginable magnitude. Such atrocities must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to book to face the full force of the law. This is as it should.



Call to Action. As Women of Kenya, we condemn and abhor violence in all its forms and shapes.

In this respect,

1. We call upon all Kenyans to hold hands and preserve peace and tranquility especially during this election year. We remind Kenyans that we have come very near to the cliff but for the grace of God. Let us not forget that lives have been lost and property worth millions of shillings destroyed in war. Many of our people are still hurting from the wounds inflicted during post-election violence. We reiterate that nobody should ever lose their lives on account of a mere election;
2. We particularly urge our political leadership to tone down their rhetoric and consider every word they utter and every action they take. This is the time to take personal responsibility and demonstrate statesmanship and leadership. Leaders of parties have a particularly huge responsibility to tame their followers and constantly denounce any irresponsible utterances with speed. To act in the contrary is to betray both self and others. Besides, the country cannot afford reckless leadership. Furthermore, Kenyans should mark, name and shame such leaders and reject them in toto on the basis of their recklessness.
3. We urge all the institutions charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order to remain alert and ruthless in dealing with perpetrators of violence including gender based violence. Such irresponsible people are criminals and should be made to bear the full weight of the law. We look forward to the time when such leaders will be barred from participating in elections or holding public offices as a deterrent measure. There cannot be any shortcuts or half measures in tackling violence of any kind. However, the law must not be applied selectively. Only then will the citizenry have confidence in the law and the institutions charged with the responsibility for implementation.
4. We appeal to our religious and faith leaders to use the opportunities and convening capacities to preach peace on all their platforms especially during religious gatherings.
5. We commend the media for its relentless efforts to highlight incidences of violence and urge them not to stop. Instead, the media must continue to call out leaders who abuse their positions or those who make irresponsible utterances. Kenyans respect the media a great deal and rely largely on what they read, watch or listen to. By calling out irresponsible leaders, the media will be playing a critical role in education the citizenry so that Kenyans can make informed choices about the type of leaders they will elect. Non-Violence and a relentless pursuit for peace must be part of the cardinal characteristic of the leader.



6. We call upon Civil Society Organizations and other relevant stakeholders to conduct civic education on the importance of electing leaders of moral standing, statesmanship and with unquestionable character. Kenya deserves this and more.
7. We urge the National Cohesion and Integration Commission to up their game including public sensitization and holding leaders who contravene the law to account. We emphasize that all wrong doers should be treated equally regardless of their status or positions. This is the only way of restoring confidence and trust.
8. We call upon all women including women politicians to join our movement for peace recognizing that violence disproportionately affects women, children and the vulnerable in the society. We urge all women and girls to be catalysts for peace. We can do it and we will do it for ourselves and for prosperity.
9. We appreciate the support of the development partners such as the UN Women for their technical and financial support especially in mobilizing and organizing women to strengthen our collective voice. As stated earlier, this is a mammoth task and requires support from all corners.
10. Finally, we invite the international community including the International Criminal Court (ICC) to keep a keen eye on the happenings in Kenya in the next Seven months or so and to take stern action including issuing warnings and marking war mongers as a definitive and final measure.

Conclusion. We acknowledge that the task of preserving peace and national unity is a mammoth task which cannot be done by one individual or a group of people on their own. Neither the Presidency, Legislature, Judiciary or even the citizenry can achieve much on their own. All of us must play their role as best as they can. That is why we are calling on all public and private institutions as well as citizens to play their role. this is the only country we have. History will judge us harshly if we destroy the only heritage we have – Kenya.

On our part as mothers and leaders under AWLN, we commit to play our role to nurture and protect peace and stability across the country. We urge our women politicians to avoid being sucked into violence and instead join hands with all other Mothers to maintain peace. In addition, AWLN Kenya has put together a team of eminent women to act as Mediators and Peace champions. We shall train and deploy these Mediators in all our 47 Counties so that they can support National Peace initiatives. We shall remain vigilant and hawk eyed to ensure that Kenya goes through this election period peacefully. Additionally, we shall also reach out to our



... other Chapters of AWLN in the Continent to ensure that we pursue a common goal of peace for all under our rallying call: #AMANIKENYA. That is the least we can do.

We are reminded of the powerful words of the once influential Anglo-Irish Statesman, Edmund Burke who once said: ***'The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.'*** As women, we commit to do no such a thing. We shall pray for our country and we shall also speak out to sustain the hope and confidence of Kenyans and strengthen the rule of law in our country. God bless Kenya.

Issued on behalf of the Women Members of AWLN on this 12th day of 2022 by

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