

TEXT -- Kenyan President Kenyatta addresses nation on Nairobi mall attack

-, 21.09.2013, 22:59 Time

USPA News - Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta addressed the nation late on Saturday after a group of suspected al-Shabaab gunmen stormed an upscale shopping mall in the capital Nairobi, killing at least 39 people, injuring more than 150 others, and taking dozens hostage. "Fellow Kenyans, This morning, a group of armed terrorists forcefully entered the Westgate Mall in Nairobi's Parklands area and unleashed senseless violence upon customers and workers. They have killed at least 39 innocent people and injured more than 150 others. With the entire nation, I stand with the families of those who have lost their lives and extend every Kenyan's deepest condolences. (I know what you feel having personally lost very close family members) I ask God to give all of you comfort as you confront this tragedy. My Government will provide the support you will need in the days to come. To those who were injured, I wish you a quick recovery from the physical and other shocks you underwent today. The Government will be at hand to ensure that your lives return to normal as quickly as possible. The people of Kenya have been wonderful, as always. With your support we safely evacuated hundreds of people from the Mall. I salute your conscientious and selfless acts of solidarity in response to the terrorist attack. Your courage and sympathy saved lives and reassured countless people. I commend those who volunteered by giving first-aid, transporting the injured to hospital, donating blood, locating and contacting loved ones and making it easy for rescue, medical and security personnel to do their work. I appreciate those who have used media to rally help of all kinds, condole with and comfort the affected and thank all those responsible citizens who have desisted from spreading panic and despondency. Please continue helping, and continue praying. The despicable perpetrators of this cowardly act hoped to intimidate, divide and cause despondency among Kenyans. They would like us to retreat into a closed, fearful and fractured society where trust, unity and enterprise are difficult to muster. An open and united country is a threat to evil doers everywhere. With our values of solidarity and love for our homeland, we fought proudly and bravely to secure the freedom to lead our lives as we choose. Our choice is codified in our Constitution. We have overcome terrorist attacks before. In fact, we have fought courageously and defeated them within and outside our borders. We will defeat them again. Terrorism in and of itself, is the philosophy of cowards. The way we lead our lives; in freedom, openness, unity and consideration for each other represents our victory over all those who wish us ill. We are as brave and invincible as the lions on our Coat of Arms. My Government stands ready to defend the nation from internal as well as external aggression. I urge all Kenyans to stand together and see this dark moment through. Donate blood. Provide information to the authorities. Comfort and reassure the affected families. Let us shame the Devil and his works by demonstrating our timeless values of love, compassion and solidarity. Our security forces are conducting a multi-agency response to this attack as we speak and are in the process of neutralizing the attackers and securing the Mall. It is a very delicate operation as our top priority remains to safe guard the lives of innocent people held up in this unfortunate incident. But let me make it clear. We shall hunt down the perpetrators wherever they run to. We shall get them. We shall punish them for this heinous crime. I have directed security agencies to be decisive in their response to this or any other threat. They must and will do this to demonstrate our constitution's categorical guarantee of Kenyans' inalienable rights to life and property. Across the country, we have tightened security but I urge all of you to remain calm and vigilant. God bless you. God bless Kenya."

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1455/text--kenyan-president-kenyatta-addresses-nation-on-nairobi-mall-attack.html>

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