

**STATEMENT TO KENYA'S CAPITAL FM**  
**Barack Obama**  
**January 28, 2008**

Thank you for having me on your show this morning.

I have been following the situation in Kenya closely, and I am deeply concerned by the news and photographs I have seen. I want you to know that my thoughts and prayers – and those of my family – are with all of the victims of the violence, and with all Kenyans who have been displaced from their homes.

Urgent action must be taken to stop this spiral of violence, and to help resolve the current political crisis.

Kenya has long been known as a multi-ethnic society. The steps you have taken toward multi-party democracy in recent years have set a proud example for east Africa.

I have personally been touched by your generous, democratic spirit through my ties to my own family, and during my travels to Kenya –most recently as a United States Senator in 2006. This Kenyan spirit rises above ethnic groups or political parties, and was on display in Kenya's recent election, when you turned out to vote in record numbers, and in a peaceful and orderly way.

But recent troubling events in Kenya bear no resemblance to the Kenya I know and carry with me. The senseless and tragic violence poses an urgent and dangerous threat to Kenyans, Kenyan democracy, and stability and economic development in a vital region.

Most troubling are new indications that the violence is being organized, planned and coordinated.

Clearly, Kenya has reached a defining moment. There is no doubt that there were serious flaws in the vote tabulation. There is also no doubt that actions taken by both sides in the aftermath of the election have deepened the political impasse.

Now is not the time to throw Kenyan democracy and national unity away. Now is the time for all parties to renounce violence.

Now is the time for Kenya's leaders to rise above party affiliation and past divisions for the sake of peace. President Kibaki, Raila Odinga, and all of Kenya's leaders – political, civic, business, and religious -- have a responsibility to calm tensions, to come together unconditionally, and to pursue a political process to address peacefully the controversies that divide them.

This crisis and terrible violence must end. A negotiated solution must be peaceful and political, and should take account of past failures and prevent future conflict.

The rule of law and the rights of the Kenyan people – including freedom of the media and the freedom of peaceful assembly – must be restored. The opposition must turn away from the path of mass protest and violence in seeking participation in government.

Recent efforts by African Eminent Persons, like Kofi Annan, have yielded very modest progress, and there is no reason President Kibaki and Mr. Odinga should refuse to sit down unconditionally. To refuse to do so ignores the will of Kenyans and the urging of the united international community. While only Kenyans can resolve this crisis, I urge you to welcome the assistance of your concerned friends in working through this difficult time.

The deep frustrations that are felt on allsides of the Kenyan divide are understandable. There is no doubt that much more work remains to be done for Kenya to become a more equitable and democratic society.

But Kenya has come too far to throw away decades of progress in a storm of violence and political unrest. We must not look back years from now and wonder how and why things were permitted to go so horribly wrong. Kenya, its African friends, and the United States must now be determined pursuers of peace – and this determined pursuit must start today with individual Kenyans refusing to resort to violence, and Kenyan leaders accepting their responsibility to turn away from confrontation by coming together.

Kenya's long democratic journey has at times been difficult. But at critical moments, Kenyans have chosen unity and progress over division and disaster. The way forward is not through violence. To all of Kenya's people, I urge you to renounce the violence that is tearing your great country apart and deepening suffering. I urge you to follow a path of peace.