



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KIAMBU

**SPEECH BY H.E GOVERNOR DR. KIMANI WAMATANGI, CBS,
EGH DURING THE 11TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF
THE MAU MAU MEMORIAL MONUMENT ON SATURDAY, 12TH
SEPTEMBER, 2026 AT FREEDOM CORNER, UHURU PARK,
NAIROBI**

Distinguished Mau Mau war veterans,
Families and descendants of the freedom fighters,
Representatives of the Kenya Human Rights Commission,
The Mau Mau War Veterans Association,
The National Museums of Kenya,
The British High Commission,
Mazingira Institute,
National and county governments representatives,
Fellow Kenyans,

Ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to grace these celebrations at Freedom Corner. This place carries the weight of our history as we commemorate the 11th anniversary of the Mau Mau Memorial Monument. I come here with a profound sense of pride as a representative of Kiambu County. Our county carried some of the heaviest burdens of the struggle for Kenya's independence. We produced men and women whose courage helped change the course of our nation.

I also have a deeply personal connection to this history. Like many Kenyans gathered here, I am a child of a generation whose parents and grandparents lived through the Emergency.

Our families carried the scars of detention, displacement, and humiliation. Our freedom today was secured at a terrible human cost. For many of us, therefore, Mau Mau is family history, preserved in the stories told by our grandparents. It lives in the names of people who disappeared into detention camps and never returned. It lives in the scars carried quietly by those who survived torture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This monument reminds us that nations do not become free by accident. They become free because, at particular moments in history, ordinary people find the courage to make extraordinary sacrifices for a cause larger than themselves.

The men and women who joined the liberation struggle understood the price they were likely to pay. Some went into the forests, while others carried messages, food and supplies. Thousands were detained, many were tortured and others died without ever seeing the Kenya they had imagined.

Their struggle was rooted in fundamental questions of land and the right of Africans to determine their own destiny. The colonial Emergency was a deeply painful and complex period of our history, with suffering and violence affecting many communities. Remembering it honestly requires us to acknowledge the experiences of all those who suffered while recognising the central place of the liberation struggle in Kenya's journey to independence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am particularly proud that Kiambu has continued to preserve and recognise the physical and cultural memory of the liberation struggle. Our county is home to some of the most significant sites associated with this history, including Mau Mau caves, Kereta Forest, Githunguri's Gallows and other heritage sites connected to the colonial period.

Kiambu's current Culture, Arts and Heritage Policy recognises these places as part of the county's cultural and natural heritage.

We have also continued to document and preserve the memory of what happened in places such as Lari, where the events of 1953 remain among the most painful memories of the Emergency period. The county has previously undertaken heritage work around the Lari Massacre Monument and Waiyaki wa Hinga Museum, recognising that our history must be preserved for generations that did not experience it.

The county has also provided a platform for the voices of the veterans themselves. In December 2023, Kiambu hosted the launch of the memoir of Mzee Gitu wa Kahengeri, *The Betrayal of Mau Mau Freedom Fighters*, during the Jamhuri Day celebrations. That occasion was significant because it allowed the story to be told not simply about the veterans, but by one of the men who lived through the struggle.

For me personally, this history carries an even deeper meaning because I had the opportunity to work with Mzee Gitu wa Kahengeri. Working with him, gave me the privilege of encountering history in human form.

When you sit with a man who lived through detention, hardship and the struggle for independence, history stops being something you read in a textbook. It becomes a memory, a lived experience and a story carried by a person who was there.

At the unveiling of this very monument in 2015, Mzee Gitu made a statement that has remained powerful: ***"Mau Maus were never terrorists, they were freedom fighters."***

Whatever terminology history may use to describe the conflict, there is an important lesson in those words.

We must never allow the sacrifices of those who fought for our freedom to be reduced to stereotypes or political convenience.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For many years, the movement was officially proscribed and its history was marginalised. In 2003, the prohibition was revoked by our Third President, Mwai Kibaki, opening an important new chapter in the recognition of the movement and enabling victims to pursue justice.

The monument that stands before us is therefore the physical expression of a difficult journey from denial to recognition, from silence to remembrance and from historical pain towards reconciliation. But recognition must not end with monuments; it must also reach the living. Many of the veterans are now elderly and have lived long enough to see the country they fought for develop and grow. They deserve our respect, our attention and our care.

We must strengthen programmes that document their oral histories, preserve places associated with the liberation struggle and ensure that our schools teach this history with the seriousness it deserves.

As we commemorate the veterans, we must remember that independence was built through collective sacrifice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The greatest tribute we can give our freedom fighters is to build a Kenya worthy of their sacrifice. That means defending constitutional democracy, protecting human rights, strengthening national unity, expanding opportunities for young people and ensuring that every Kenyan can live with dignity.

Our responsibility is to ensure that the memory of the liberation struggle remains an active part of our national consciousness.

We must continue documenting the experiences of surviving veterans and preserving the forests, caves, detention sites, graves and other places associated with the struggle, while ensuring that our children learn about this history in a manner that is honest, comprehensive and grounded in the experiences of those who lived through it.

To the surviving Mau Mau veterans and their families, I offer my profound respect and gratitude. The Kenya we know today was shaped by sacrifices made by people who had no assurance that they would live to see the freedom they were fighting for. Their contribution deserves to be remembered with dignity, studied with honesty and carried forward with a sense of responsibility by all of us who have benefited from the freedom they helped secure.

Thank you very much. God bless you.