

Nairobi blast survivors meet bin Laden's death with prayer

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Nairobi, Kenya, May 3 (ENInews)--The killing of Osama bin Laden has united survivors of the 1998 terrorist attack on the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya who now say they find strength in faith in God and prayer.

"Our faith has been giving us strength to soldier on in very difficult times. Our lives were changed forever," Douglas Sidialo, who leads a group of Kenya terrorist attack survivors and families, told ENInews on 3 May.

He was speaking at a memorial park constructed at the site of where the embassy stood and where other survivors had converged following the news of bin Laden's killing on 1 May in Pakistan at the hands of U.S. forces. Sidialo was blinded by the attack in which 250 people died and about 4000 were injured. The names of those who died are engraved in a plaque at the centre of the park.

The al Quaida terrorist organization, which bin Laden founded, said it carried out the attack and another one in 2002 on an Israeli-owned resort known as Paradise Hotel in Kikambala on the Kenyan coast. In that attack, 15 were killed and 80 injured. On 3 May, the Kenyan survivors who were crippled, scarred or blinded, together with their relatives and friends, converged at the park to pray.

"We look at this park as a holy place, a place of celebration and a place of honour for those who died or whose lives were changed forever by the blast. For us, this is a place of peace and hope," said Sidialo, a Roman Catholic turned Baptist. Tears fell freely as the survivors remembered their loved ones. "They should have arrested him so that he could confess his sins ... That would have given the world more peace and hope," he said. (U.S. forces said they were met with gunfire as they entered bin Laden's compound near Islamabad.)

Faith leaders in Kenya have made guarded comments on bin Laden's death. The government welcomed the news, while putting the country on a security alert. "Bin Laden spread his ideology not by words, but by acts of violence. We must be vigilant against strikes by the lieutenants he trained and left behind," said Raila Odinga, Kenya's prime minister.

"The world would not wish Osama was alive," said Anglican Bishop Julius Kalu of Mombasa. "He brings back memories of the 1998 bombing of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam embassies, and the twin bombings in the World Trade Center [in 2001] in America. We hope this is the first step to wipe out terrorism. Terrorists continue to make the world very unsafe."

Sheikh Juma Ngao, the National Chairman of the Kenya Muslim National Advisory Council, said Islam forbids the killing of innocent people. "I urge Kenyan Muslim youth not to take this path. I also want to warn those who are using our religion to kill others. The Quran forbids that," said Ngao.