



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

Prof. Patrick V. Verkooijen

TRIBUTE TO THE RT. HON. RAILA AMOLLO ODINGA

Kenya mourns, Africa pauses, and the world bows in reverence to one of its most resolute sons the Rt. Hon. Raila Amollo Odinga. The global community has lost a statesman of extraordinary courage, a visionary who embodied the spirit of justice, resilience, and transformation. His was a life lived in service to his country, his continent, and humanity.

The University of Nairobi joins the nation in mourning the loss of a distinguished alumnus, former faculty member, and honorary doctorate recipient. Raila Odinga's journey with the University is woven into the very fabric of its history. In the early 1970s, after completing his studies in East Germany, he joined the Faculty of Engineering as a lecturer in Mechanical Engineering, inspiring a generation of young engineers through his dedication to excellence and innovation. Until his passing, he remained an active member of the Chiromo Club, where faculty and scholars from diverse disciplines continue to exchange ideas shaping Kenya's academic and intellectual landscape.

During the 1980s, Raila Odinga was detained several times without trial under the Moi regime for his political activism and advocacy for democracy. Even in confinement, he remained deeply connected to the ideals of learning and freedom of thought. Some of his fellow detainees were members of the University of Nairobi faculty, including Prof. Alfred Otieno, then Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. These experiences strengthened his conviction that education and justice are inseparable pillars of national progress.

In recognition of his immense contribution to peace, democracy, and national unity, the University of Nairobi in 2008 conferred upon him the Honorary Doctor of Laws (LL.D., Honoris Causa), alongside H.E. Mwai Kibaki and the late Kofi Annan, for their leadership in guiding Kenya toward reconciliation following the post-election crisis. Through his association with this University as lecturer, statesman, and advocate for education Raila Odinga exemplified the transformative power of knowledge and the enduring impact of mentorship.

He believed deeply in the power of education to change destinies. He championed free and equitable access to learning, from early childhood to university level, insisting that no child should be left behind. Through his "Waste No Child" initiative, he worked to ensure that every Kenyan child could attend school and receive nutritious meals. He advocated for the full release of education capitation funds, improved school infrastructure, and county-level feeding programmes for ECDE learners. Through the Raila Odinga Foundation, he supported scholarships and mentorship opportunities for bright but needy students giving countless young Kenyans a chance to learn, to dream, and to rise.



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An advocate for equity and climate justice, Raila recognized that the fight for democracy must also include the fight for a liveable planet. His voice resonated across the global stage, calling for climate action rooted in fairness and sustainability values we at the University of Nairobi hold dear. He promoted renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, and green industrial growth, and championed continental initiatives such as Desert to Power to expand access to clean energy across Africa. He stood for a greener, more resilient continent one where prosperity and planetary health go hand in hand.

His legacy is written not only in our Constitution and institutions but in the hearts of millions whose lives he touched. Through every challenge, he remained a teacher reminding us that conviction is stronger than fear and that true leadership is service.

Today, we mourn, but we also celebrate a life of purpose, a life that moved nations, a life that will continue to inspire scholars, leaders, and dreamers for generations to come.

May his indomitable spirit live on in every act of courage, in every pursuit of justice, and in every young mind that dares to imagine a better Kenya.

I join the University of Nairobi fraternity, the people of Kenya, and the global community in honouring this remarkable son of Africa. May his courage continue to guide us, and his spirit rest in eternal peace

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Patrick Verkooijen".

Prof. Patrick V. Verkooijen
CHANCELLOR