

Compensate victims of 1998 embassy bombing

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United States of America Ambassador to Kenya Margaret Meg addresses a press conference at the Embassy on Sunday, August 6, 2022. [Samson Wire. Standard].

Sunday, August 7, 2022, marked the 24th anniversary of the twin bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

On the morning of August 7, 1998, terrorists drove a van into the embassy compound next to Cooperative House on Haile Selassie Avenue and detonated a bomb. The force of the blast was so huge, it shattered glasses in nearby buildings and completely destroyed the embassy and adjoining buildings.

The blast left 224 people dead and more than 4,000 wounded. The attack was blamed on Al Qaeda under the command of Osama Bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

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As fate would have it, the US hunted down the terrorists and exacted revenge by killing Osama in 2011 and Zawahiri on Sunday last week. For its role in facilitating the bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Sudan was placed on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list by the US government.

Last year, Sudan agreed to pay \$335 million to the American families of the bombings as a condition for being removed from the terrorist sponsors list. That compensation left out locals, yet they bore the brunt of the attack.

The US Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Act only offers compensation to American citizens of terror attacks. However, the Act was amended in 2019 to include another group of people. It is on the basis of that, therefore, that the Kenyan victims of the bombing should be compensated.

It is disheartening that more than two decades later, the families and survivors of the attack are still waiting for compensation. The US government should do the right thing and compensate the victims, some who, unfortunately, have passed on while patiently waiting for compensation.

The extent of the injuries sustained by some of the victims was such that they have, and continue to incur huge medical bills. Others lost their abilities to fend for themselves and need something to fall back on. For that reason, compensation should be expedited.

The local victims paid the price of something they knew nothing about. They deserve justice.