

RAILA AMOLLO ODINGA: A STATESMAN, PATRIOT, AND A CHAMPION FOR KENYA VISION 2030

Raila Amollo Odinga's name will be forever etched in the very fabric of Kenya's history as a man whose life was shaped by self-sacrifice, sustained by principle, and devoted entirely to the service of his country. His legacy spans across the struggle for democracy, the advancement of national development, and the pursuit of a united, just, and prosperous Kenya.

Above all, Raila was not only a transformational leader, but also a true statesman, a father, a brother, and a friend to many across the globe. His story is one of resilience, leadership, and an enduring commitment to nationhood.

Born in 1945 to the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, one of Kenya's founding fathers, Raila inherited a legacy of political consciousness and service. After completing his education in East Germany, where he earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering and Welding, he returned home with a strong sense of purpose to contribute to the building of a modern, forward-thinking, and industrial Kenya. However, the path he chose was not an easy one.



Early photos of the late Raila Odinga, his wife Ida Odinga and his late son Fidel Odinga

In the 1980s and 1990s, under the rule of the late Hon. Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, Raila became a central figure in the struggle against the "one-party rule" and authoritarianism. His bold opposition to state repression led to him being arrested multiple times and detained without trial, spending nearly nine years of his life in prison. The time behind bars did not break him; instead, it strengthened his resolve.



His sacrifices helped lay the groundwork for Kenya's Second Liberation: the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, and later, the long and difficult journey towards the 2010 Constitution.

Raila's formal political career began in 1992 when he was elected Member of Parliament for Lang'ata. His deep sense of patriotism and unmatched ability to connect with the people quickly propelled him to national prominence.

His tenure as Minister for Energy (2001–2002) saw significant liberalization of the sector and foundational steps toward rural electrification; a critical development enabler. As Minister for Roads, Public Works, and Housing in 2003, Raila oversaw critical upgrades to Kenya's road infrastructure, setting the stage for projects that would later become central to Vision 2030.



The Former President, The Late Mwai Kibaki (right) with The Former Prime Minister, The late Raila Odinga (third left), former vice-president Kalonzo Musyoka (second left) and former Planning minister Wycliffe Oparanya when they unveiled the Vision 2030 logo at KICC, Nairobi, in 2008.

He was not just a political leader; he was a visionary who helped shape the very foundations of modern Kenya. In 2006, as a key figure in the establishment of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), Raila played a pivotal role in conceptualizing and guiding the economic framework that would evolve into Kenya Vision 2030; the country's bold blueprint for transforming into a middle income, industrializing nation. Through NESC, he championed long-term thinking in public policy, economic reform, and inclusive planning, anchoring development in sustainability and national cohesion.

It was during his tenure as Prime Minister (2008–2013) in the Grand Coalition Government that Raila Odinga made some of his most lasting contributions to Kenya's development journey. Kenya formally adopted Vision 2030, and Raila serving as one of its chief architects ensured the vision translated into action.



The swearing in Ceremony; where Hon Raila Amollo Odinga was sworn in as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya.

As Prime Minister, he championed inclusive governance through a broad-based cabinet, bringing together leaders across political lines. Among them was Hon. Wycliffe Oparanya, former Minister for Planning, who played a key role in aligning government policy with the goals of Vision 2030. Together, they drove transformative projects like the Thika Superhighway, expansion of the Port of Mombasa, and the groundwork for the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR); all critical infrastructure enablers of economic growth.

He also led reforms in the energy sector, expanding investment in geothermal and wind power, while extending rural electrification to connect communities and stimulate local economies. But for Raila, infrastructure was only part of the picture; he believed in people-centered development.



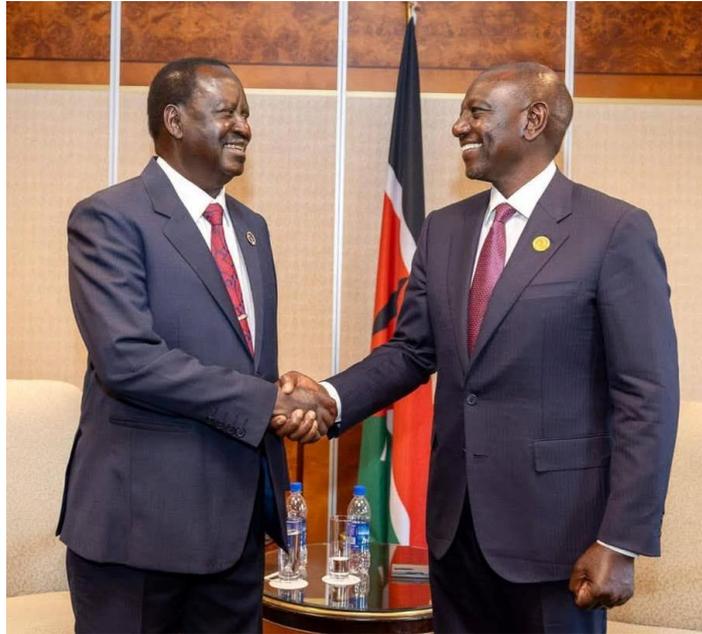
The late Raila Odinga launching a Kshs. 120B project in Kisumu in early 2025

A staunch advocate for justice and inclusion, Raila was instrumental in the passage of the 2010 Constitution, which introduced devolution; a key political pillar of Vision 2030. Through this, Raila envisioned a Kenya where counties had equal opportunity for growth, autonomy, and access to national resources. His vision ensured development was not concentrated in a few regions but spread equitably across the country.

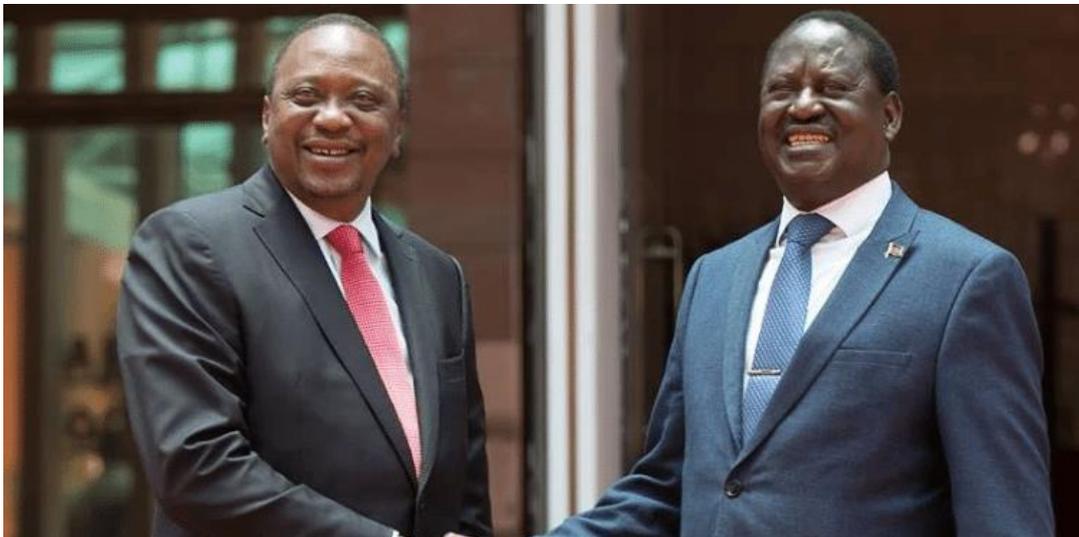
His commitment to national unity was again on full display in 2018, when he chose peace over politics through the historic Handshake with President Uhuru Kenyatta. This act of statesmanship led to the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), aimed at solving deep-rooted issues around inclusion, governance, and national cohesion; core ideals embedded in Vision 2030.

In his later years, Raila championed the idea of a "Broad-based Government;" a digital Kenya where technology drives governance, education, innovation, and entrepreneurship. He envisioned a country with digitized public services, accessible healthcare, online business platforms, and youth-led innovation hubs. His foresight in the tech space laid the groundwork for platforms like e-Citizen, reinforcing his status as a forward-looking leader always preparing Kenya for the next frontier of development.

True to his broad-based and inclusive approach, Raila ensured that this long-term vision would be carried forward by a new generation of leaders.



The handshake between His excellency William Ruto and Raila Odinga marked a symbolic moment of unity and reconciliation and reinforced the call for a broad-based, inclusive government.



On March 9, 2018, Hon. Raila Amolo Odinga and President Uhuru Kenyatta made history with a public handshake on the steps of Harambee House in Nairobi.



The Late Hon. Raila Amollo Odinga's handshakes with President Mwai Kibaki and Kofi Annan in 2008 marked a turning point in Kenya's history — moments that ended post-election violence and restored peace following the deeply disputed 2007 presidential election.

But beyond the politics and policy, Raila Amollo Odinga was a deeply human figure. A father, husband, brother, and friend; he was grounded in family, humility, and empathy. He walked with the powerful and the poor alike, listened deeply, and carried the hopes of millions. His life was a blend of courage and compassion, strength and humility, struggle and vision.



The family Man; The late Hon. Raila Amollo Odinga and his family



The late Raila Amollo Odinga during many of his public appearances.

As Kenya continues on the path of Vision 2030, it does so on foundations that Raila Odinga helped build with courage, clarity, and conviction. His legacy is not only written in our Constitution, infrastructure, and institutions, but also in the hearts of millions who drew hope and strength from his example. He was, and remains, one of Kenya's greatest sons; a statesman of unmatched stature, a reformer of deep resolve, and a visionary who dared to dream of a better Kenya; one that works for all.

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