Stanley Gazemba

For the very first time in my life I ushered in the New Year not with firecrackers and foaming beer but with ear-splitting shots from Police G3 rifles. And I was not getting drenched in beer at a frenzied pub hugging sweaty teary-eyed strangers but lying right in my bed, sober as a priest, too scared to venture outside, or to even turn on the TV to watch my President addressing me. This was clearly one New Year that I will not forget in a hurry, and which I will not miss either.

Having come out of the recent general election and lived through the pre-election euphoria that saw us wake up at the crack of dawn to line up patiently on some of the longest queues that I have ever seen, it was disappointing to see that in the end the ECK was going to bring our heightened hopes crashing down with a botched verdict that would make a mockery of the hope and effort we invested in the entire process. I did not take the trouble to vote just to be cheated.

I cannot deny that I am angry. I still don't think I can find it in my heart to forgive the scare the gunshots that rent the night in the chaos following the announcement of the new President put in my son. Above all, I am extremely angry with those who led us into the sticky situation that we are in at the moment. For, frankly, I don't think that the sheer quest for power is that important as to endanger the stability of a nation.

In the depths of my heart I still cherish being a part of this great nation, our differences notwithstanding. It is for this reason that I shared a meal and a drink with my Kikuyu neighbour on New Year's eve, even when the politics of the day dictated that we should have been going for each other's throats. Why, later in the night, even as gunshots rattled the walls, I had a spirited argument with him concerning the alleged rigging of the elections by the PNU camp. And although we didn't come to a mutual conclusion, we still didn't come to blows. We wouldn't have with the wall separating us, anyway! And I was humbled later in the night when I got a call from another Kikuyu friend asking about my safety, and offering to accommodate me and my family in his house incase things went out of hand. It is this unique Kenyanness that makes me extremely proud to have been born in this wonderful country among these wonderful people. It is this unique Kenyanness that I can never trade away, at any cost whatever.

I think it is essential that we learn, as a nation, never to allow our ideological differences to lead us to the level where we pick up a machete and a match-stick. We should learn to keep our primitive animal instincts that led ancient tribes to plunder their neighbours reined in and kept strictly in check. They simply have no place in this day and age. This is a modern society that must learn to argue without coming to blows. It is the duty of every forward-looking Kenyan to keep this beautiful country from going to the dogs; instead we should all protect our hard-earned peace and prosperity that took so long to achieve.

And as they watch the smoldering debris of the KAG church in Eldoret where 40 people were roasted alive and look at the pictures of the Kibera residents sleeping in the open at Jamhuri grounds, together with the thousands of the internally displaced Kenyans trekking along the roads, I hope those who perpetrated the vote-rigging, if it is indeed true, are clapping themselves on the back in congratulation for a job well done.