

The UK government still **refuses to apologise for what it did in Kenya.**



### **Letter written by David Larder**

The following is the full text of a letter written by David Larder, who served in Britain's colonial army in Kenya, to the *Guardian* newspaper last year, following the court settlement which saw the UK government

pay out £2,670 to each of the 5,228 elderly Kenyans judged eligible for compensation for atrocities committed in the 1950s. The UK government still **refuses to apologise for what it did in Kenya.** That's one reason David Larder's letter is worth reading.



***“ I doubt if all the secrets of the Kikuyu uprising will ever be known. Young soldiers were brainwashed into believing they were fighting in Kenya for our glorious empire. Sixty years ago I was there as a 19-year-old national service officer. I am delighted that the government has given some token compensation for Kenyans who suffered torture (Britain's brutal past exposed, 6 June). I still suffer from memories of the British apartheid system there and numerous instances of arbitrary killing and brutality by British forces, Kenya police and Kenyan African Rifles. In reality we protected land-grabbing British farmers and enriched UK companies.***

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**Young troops were encouraged to shoot any African on sight in certain areas. Prize money was offered by senior officers for every death. The brains of one young black lad I shot with no warning (by orders) landed on my chest. He had no weapons, only a piece of the Bible and part of an English-language primer in his pocket. Before I burned his body near the farm where he had been working, I was ordered to cut off his hands, which I did, and put them in my ammunition pouches, as we'd run out of fingerprinting kits. Of course, he was recorded as "a terrorist". I was told to shoot down unarmed women in the jungle because they were carrying food to the so-called "Mau Mau" – a word they never called themselves.**

**The whole of this Kenyan tragedy was predictable. Although Kenyan black troops had fought for the British in the second world war, they were rewarded with their land being taken away, no press or trade union freedom, suppression of political movements and slave-like conditions of work, which I witnessed. Yes, some black Kenyans did turn on others for not rising up against such indignities. But many of those who were killed were local chiefs and their supporters, who had co-operated with hugely rich white farmers. However, the revenge killings by the colonial authorities were totally disproportionate – with bombing raids, burning of villages and the forced movement of thousands of families onto poorer land, in the name of "protection". Very few white people were killed by Africans.**

**But it wasn't just the black people who suffered. I remember telling my company commander that a young soldier whose medical records showed he was only fit for clerical work should not go on a military exercise. I was laughed at. He was forced to go. After three hours' steep climb through**

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*jungle, he died in my arms, probably from a heart attack. Because I remonstrated, I was ordered to take a donkey and carry his body, which kept slipping off, for nearly a week to deposit him at HQ on the other side of the Aberdare mountains. **His mother was told he was a hero who'd died on active service.***

*I was sickened by my experiences. I disobeyed orders and was court-martialled and dismissed from the service. I actually thought I was going to be shot. Stripped of my uniform, I was told to make my own way home. Then I wrote to Bessie Braddock, the Labour MP, and was put back in my uniform to fly home in a RAF plane. After campaigning around the country for Kenyan independence, I received new call-up papers, because I had not finished my national service. I then decided to stand trial and become the first British man allowed to be registered as a conscientious objector against colonial warfare. History has proved me right. With these expressions of “regret” by our foreign secretary, I now feel vindicated for being pilloried as a “conchie”.*

## **The Telegraph**

By [Mike Pflanz](#), Nairobi 4:44PM BST 06 Jun 2013

**Mau Mau: Britain 'sincerely regrets' colonial-era abuses of Kenya, but stopped short of a full apology.**

**Britain announced compensation for thousands of Mau Mau veterans, saying that it “sincerely regretted” years of “suffering and injustice” carried out under its imperial rule. The brutal suppression of an independence rebellion led to**

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**torture, internment without trial and excessive numbers of executions, William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, said in a statement to Parliament.**

**He confirmed that more than 5,200 claimants would share compensation from the Government of £13.9 million, but said that the out-of-court settlement did not mean Britain was legally liable for the abuses, although he said the settlement was about a “process of reconciliation.”**

**“I would like to make clear now and for the first time ... that we understand the pain and grievance felt by those who were involved,” Mr Hague said.**

**“The British Government recognises that Kenyans were subject to torture and other forms of ill treatment at the hands of the colonial administration. [We] sincerely regret that these abuses took place.”**

**Britain will also help to pay for a new memorial in Nairobi to what Mr Hague called “victims of torture and ill-treatment during the colonial era”.**

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**(The newly obtained documents show that colonial officials and police officers were aware that prisoners were being raped, beaten, whipped and subjected to summary execution. Even children were killed. Eight white officers accused of "roasting detainees alive" were granted an amnesty.)**