

Saturday, 05 January 2008

Dear All,

It has been so very lovely and reassuring to hear from very many of you over these past few days and to know that you are praying for us, and thinking of us at this very, very sad time for Kenya. As one recent visitor wrote it is so distressing to think of what happening in some of the beautiful places he visited and to the beautiful people he got to know.

Who was it that said power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Here we see two powerful people from the comfort and safety of their places of residence refusing to compromise and at the same time taking actions that incite 'their' people and put 'their' people at risk. Clearly the governing powers whether rightly exercising these cannot sit back and accept people rioting, looting and killing one another.

Our two visitors, Mark and Samatha Wills, returned home safely on Wednesday from their ten day stay with us, sadly a stay that was dominated by the unrest forcing them to remain indoors for over half of this time. As I drove them to the airport very early Wednesday morning, avoiding the very many burnt out tyres and cars, the rocks, and other debris that littered the roads, forcing me to zig zag on and off the road for much of the way, Mark said that he should be videoing the scenes of devastation, but then said he would rather not remember

it that way. Let's pray that these very ugly images of what man can do to man will soon be replaced with peace and love; we pray the love of Christ. The scene down the main highway in Kisumu, Oginga Odinga St. which some of you may have seen on BBC or Sky news is one of utter devastation with the majority of shops either burnt through or looted. Some of this was just nothing more than just wanton theft whilst others the mindless venting of anger against those owners which belong to one of the tribal groups supporting President Kibaki.

My return drive from the airport was somewhat more eventful as I continued not only to avoid the obstacles on the road but also came upon a large group of youths, some 100 to 200 in number, just 100-150 metres in front of me setting fire to a car on the road and jumping up and down in jubilation. Praise God I was able to make a quick detour and go along another route. Very sadly one of our very first boys, Gabriel, discharged long ago due to his continued thieving, was among this group and he and many others very excitedly were waving and shouting Terry to me. The alternative route that I was forced to take took me along a road for about 2 kilometres with even more burnt out vehicles and debris and with large groups of youths gathered all the way along it. Many, many shouted 'muzungu', 'white man', to me and waved and cheered, especially when I responded in Luo.

One of my friends, who works or now maybe worked at a restaurant I use quite frequently, was, holed up at the local police compound for her, and approx 3000 others, protection. Grace a very friendly, helpful woman – would always tell me to avoid the 'fish' or something if not fresh – and is to my surprise a Kikuyu. I had not realised this as I know she speaks fluent Luo and has I believe lived in

these parts for most of her life. I doubt that any of Grace's few, guess meagre possessions, are still there.

There are so many stories such as this and even as I write the account the only reaction can be one of tears and extreme sadness.

On a more positive note somehow I have managed to lose some 5 – 6 kilo's over this past week, just shows the benefit of a more restricted diet.

Anyway how are things right now? Whilst out on Wednesday I managed to get some money with which we were able to pay the staff at least a small amount. Banks, after some 11 days of being closed (Christmas holidays and the election etc) reopened yesterday and Caleb following a very long queue managed to get some money out of the account and thankfully was also able to obtain a large amount of maize flour and some other essential food items. Even the more to be thankful for was that he returned home safely, though with a puncture, and having passed through several blockades where youths were demanding payment for safe passage. Whilst he was out sporadic gunfire was heard just behind where we live. Otherwise we are all safe, have enough food and money and as I write the boys are happily, apart from the few arguments, playing football outside with all the intensity of a world cup final.

Please remember that what I am writing does not apply to the whole of Kenya, some places I guess are relatively unaffected. Here in Kisumu, one of the worst affected places, there remains no public transport other than bicycle taxi, only two garages are open and with the run on these it is difficult to see for how

much longer they will have supplies. Only two major super markets are open and queues for these I am told stretch for several hundred metres. The cost of the basic commodities that can be obtained has risen greatly, generally some 25%. Fruit and vegetables are virtually non existent. We hope and pray that these things will soon become available and at a price that people can afford. It is difficult for us but for the average person living in one of the vast slum areas faced with such acute shortage of goods and increase in prices, including the basic commodity of water, life is absolute dire.

Schools were supposed to reopen this coming Monday 7th January but this has been put back a week, even this is to me seems a very unlikely date for the kids to return. Transport needs to get back on the roads, fuel for this needs to be available and boarding schools, remember all our secondary school children are in boarding, attend schools with numbers up to 1200. I cannot see how any school in the worst affected areas can stock up to feed such a great number.

So in conclusion the situation is still chaotic and the future uncertain.

We pray that reason, good will, will in the end prevail, if not then I can only fear that this beautiful country will slip further into anarchy and division, God forbid a situation such as was the case in Rwanda developes here.

Thank you for all your prayer and love.

Be blessed

Terry