

Saturday, 12 January 2008

Dear All,

It is with great thanks to our Father God that I write this, being very thankful for health, strength, safety, food and peace for each of us here. It is situations such as we have experienced these past two weeks that can help remind of just what we take for granted.

It is now two weeks since the debacle of the election announcements took place and what a two weeks. From a country that knew relative peace and accommodation of 'tribal' differences we now see a country divided along 'tribal' grounds and where some long standing simmering resentment has surfaced in a very ugly and cruel way.

With regards to the election I find it difficult to remain dispassionate and I think anyone with any sense of justice in their bones cannot but think that something is terribly wrong with the way that this President has been sworn in again for a second term. I don't think, for me it is a matter of believing Raila Odinga would be the better President, I have no idea, it is a belief that there is sufficient doubt about the final Presidential tallying to leave all but the most jaundiced with the view that Raila Odinga won the race or there should fresh elections. It seems very strange that the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya now says he does not know who really won, or the European Observers chairman says there were such doubt concerning the final tallying to suggest things were seriously flawed. Most foreign commentators, Law Society of Kenya, Civil Society of Kenya etc all saying exactly the same thing, in other words it strongly appears that this election was rigged. Also how can one explain how Raila Odinga's party O.D.M. took 6 out of the 8 Provinces, or gained an overall majority of MPs against all other parties combined. Why should this have happened when people were voting at the same time for President, Parliamentary, and local. Or why swear in the President within one hour of the result being announced in the private ceremony at the White House. Non of it adds up.

There is peace and quiet at the moment, though I have heard of some fighting today in Sotik between Kalinjin and Kisii tribe groups. Next Tuesday, Parliament is set to open and that could prove to be a very chaotic time and worse still O.D.M. have called for more 'peace' rallies Wednesday, Thursday and Friday throughout the country. Many people here are predicting even worse violence should Tuesday's Parliamentary opening go against O.D.M. The anger here in Kisumu is almost palpable and sadly appears on the verge of exploding again.

So where are we, the staff and youngsters of Uhuru in all of this. Schools are set to reopen on Monday and Tuesday of this coming week. Primary schools here in Nyanza Province, primarily Luo tribe, should manage to open though any school with Kisii or Kikuyu teachers and pupils might find them absent. The larger problem would seem to be in the secondary schools especially those with boarding facility, remember all our youngsters are boarding. In addition to these schools experiencing the same Kikuyu, Kisii teacher/pupil problems they are likely to have real difficulty getting food stuff bought in, and/or being able to afford the inflated price of food. Public travel is not yet

back to normal and most fares have increased by 100 to 300 percent. Vehicles are still being attacked or may have to pass through blockades where gangs of youth demand exorbitant amounts of money to pass safely through. Should any further rioting occur next week and boarding schools are open with maybe upwards of 1200 pupils then they themselves could be a powder keg ready to explode - sadly even in more peaceful times it is not uncommon for a few boarding schools to experience severe rioting.

I was shopping yesterday at our largest supermarket, Nakumatt, equivalent of a large Tesco's, it was packed and though basic cooking items such as flour, rice, sugar, oil, salt etc were available there was not a single item of fresh fruit or vegetable available, not a single potato nor onion. Sadly at the same supermarket when I was there on Tuesday there remained evidence of bullet holes in the thickened glass windows and red stains on the outside walls where I was informed some 9 thieves were shot dead. Any further trouble next week will see the food availability decline further. Prices have already shot up and one knows that it is the very poorest of society that is affected most.

With official figures of 500 killed and 250,000 displaced by the recent rioting, and most think these numbers are on the conservative side, it is difficult to see even if there is not any further large scale rioting, just how and when this country will get back to normal. Please pray.

Yours in love and appreciation.

Terry