

Numerous friends have asked for my assessment of the violence in Kenya. I've travelled frequently in Kenya since 1995 and conducted meetings, seminars and conferences there. Kenya has never been a Frontline mission field, but more a forward base for our ministry into Sudan. So I'm by no means any kind of authority on Kenya, but as a frequent traveler to that country I have a few observations.

The Kikuyu Connection

It would seem that the fighting is primarily tribal. The Kikuyu tribe has dominated politics in Kenya since Mau Mau leader Jomo Kenyatta became the first President in the 1963. There is tremendous resentment of the Kikuyu dominance politically, and the inevitable nepotism and corruption surrounding the ruling party/tribe.

A Stolen Election

The present outbreak of violence since the disputed election results of 27 December seems to be a result of a blatantly rigged election process. As the votes were being counted it was clear that the existing government was being voted out of office. Three days after the vote, on live television, the population saw para-military police storm the Kenyatta International Conference Centre where the votes were being counted. Minutes later the Head of the Election Commission declared the incumbent President Kibaki (a Kikuyu) the winner!

Mob Violence

Supporters of the challenger, Odinga, who previously had been reported to have a substantial lead, poured onto the streets in an explosion of violence against Kibaki's tribe, the Kikuyu. Although the Kikuyu's only make up 22% of the population, they dominate both the government and business.

International reports, such as the 2005 Report by the Society for International Development, a civil society monitoring group, catalogued how Kibaki had packed his cabinet, state corporations, the judiciary and provincial administrations with his tribesmen. Tribal animosities have been festering since at least 1963 when the British handed over to Kenyatta and granted the country independence.

The epi-centre of the violence in Nairobi has been Africa's largest slum, Kibera, where over a million people live in tin shacks and clapboard houses, without plumbing, electricity, hospitals or jobs, (just a few minutes from some of the most luxurious homes imaginable.) Starting on New Years Eve, tens of thousands of Kalenjin and Luo tribesmen tore through the Kikuyu sections of Kibera. Some Kikuyu gangs struck back, but tens of thousands fled to the central highlands. Most recent report I have seen puts the death toll at 900, so far.

Tribalism and Corruption

Observers blame corruption and tribalism as the root of Kenya's woes. Kenya ranks 8 th from the bottom of the list of the worlds most corrupt countries, as compiled by Transparency International. Kibaki's government has followed the example of it's predecessor Daniel Arap Moi with allegations of dirty deals running into many hundreds of millions of dollars. The former prosecutor to deal with corruption, John Githongo fled into exile in Britain in 2005 because of death threats against him. He reported that the President had no commitment to fight corruption, and that Kibaki had failed to honour promises to share power and economic opportunities, to reform the constitution and fight corruption.

The Most Corrupt Continent

He described fixing the election results as *"like throwing a match into a fuel drum."* Africa is reported to be the world's most corrupt continent with 36 out of 52 counties affected by rampant corruption. In Nigeria, the Economical Financial Crimes Commission reported that the country's rulers from 1960-1999 stole \$400 billion.

In South Africa, barely a week has gone by without new corruption scandals among the ANC business and political leaders being reported. A week after being elected leader of the ruling African National Congress, Jacob Zuma was indicted on charges of racketeering, money laundering, corruption and fraud.

Opportunism

However, as with any riots, opportunists are using the opportunity to settle old debts, and to enrich themselves with loot.

Church Burned

On New Years Day, a mob of several hundred people armed with machetes, clubs and bows and arrows surrounded a church in Kiambaa in the Northern Rift Valley. 200 men, woman and children were praying in the church. Those who willing gave up mobile phones, or money, were allowed to go, the rest were trapped in the church which was then set alight. An estimated 35 people were killed in the blaze.

Shops Looted

Hundreds of shops have been looted and destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people have fled from their homes. Much of the fighting seems to be between the Kikuyus and the rival Kalenjin, Luhya and Luo tribes.

The Poster Child of “The African Renaissance”

What has been particularly disturbing to many about the violence is that Kenya was considered the Poster Child of the “African Renaissance” and it has received literally billions of dollars in aid from the US government. Kenya is the headquarters for most mission organizations and non-governmental organizations in Africa, and it has been considered the most stable country in Africa.

Beneath the Surface

Officially over 70% of Kenya are Christians. Most of the American missionaries in Africa are based in Kenya. The wholesale corruption, tribal violence and cruel mob savagery seen in the last month in Kenya is a warning of what lies just beneath the surface of even one of the most popular tourist destinations in Africa.

A Challenge to the Churches

Evidently much of the missionary work that has been done in Africa has been superficial. Plainly Africa’s greatest need is Discipleship. From our mission’s perspective this is a challenge to do a more thorough job in Leadership Training, preaching and teaching of repentance and restitution, and laying solid foundations for a true Biblical Reformation and Spiritual Revival in Africa.

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