



JOHN PAUL II JUSTICE AND PEACE CENTRE
Kampala Uganda

“A WOUNDED AND BREEDING NATION, WOUNDED AND BREEDING HEARTS”

Uganda is embroiled in conflict and violence which has led to the death, blood shed, traumatization and destruction of property worthy of billions of dollars. Subsequently, as a nation, Uganda is wounded and breeding, and hearts of those who either live in Uganda or have known her history and the history of conflict and wars in many African nations are wounded and breeding. Kampala's streets are deserted, thick plumes of black smoke from burning tyres rise over the city's hills. Gun shots are heard from every corner of the city and its suburbs.

What has sparked off flesh violence?

The violence has been triggered by land and power disputes between President Yoweri Museveni's government and leaders of Buganda, one of the country's four ancient kingdoms. The largely cultural and ceremonial monarch of Buganda, Kabaka Ronald Mutebi, was planning to visit the flashpoint town of Kayunga Saturday to meet some of the people in his Kingdom. While the Kabake and his people were resolved to go, the president is adamant that the Kabaka should not go. When Kabaka's prime minister (katikiro) was going to prepare the way for the Kabaka, he was barred from visiting Kayunga, a town east of Kampala which is part of Buganda's historical territory. He was preparing the ground for the king's arrival Saturday. When the news were disseminated around the country riots begun yesterday at around 12.30. The government has refused to state clearly why they prevented the King's visit to his territory. Obvious reason is that the Central government is threatened by the support and confidence that the Kabaka enjoys in a wide population of His kingdom which is almost half of Uganda. In view of the forth-coming political elections in 2011, the central government is threatened to lose. Hence, all attempts to jeopardise the Kabaka's moves and gatherings with His people.

Unless checked, this stand-off could have genuine repercussions on voting patterns in the 2011 polls, or even on national stability. Buganda has been a darling for as long as it was happy to take what the government gave, but Mengo's increasingly assertive approach to Good governance, the rule of law, an education system devoid of values, etc. has extracted an extremely violent reaction.

Past and future social, political, and economic events have created a condition in Uganda in which violence as a method for gaining and maintaining power is able to perpetuate itself. People are tired of dictatorship, lack of respect for the constitution, an equal distribution of resources, bad governance and lack of a participatory style of leadership and other vices. Easily said, the population is feed up and the government

seems not to read or denies the warning signs. The government's refusal to guarantee Kabaka Ronald Mutebi's security on his scheduled visit to Kayunga, has been interpreted as undermining the Kingdom and extracted a violent reaction from a normally pacified Ganda populace.

In the violence, hundreds of people are injured and some killed. The exact numbers are not yet known since the mayhem has spread all over Kabaka's Kingdom. It was communicated by the media yesterday night that 70 people were critically injured and ten dead in the referral hospital of Mulago. The majority of the victims are youth since Uganda's biggest population is between age brackets of 13-40. Among the dead was a teen-ager who had been shot in the head and was wrapped in a shawl, surrounded by sobbing relatives. Witnesses said security forces riding armoured personnel carriers killed him and another young man. "This kid was not in the protest. They shot him in a shop," the boy's mother told Reuters. Tonight, the Kabaka is under siege. All over Kampala, armed soldiers and police are deployed.

Options

The first option would be for the president to put the blame on over-zealous officials and allow the Kabaka to visit Kayunga," although this might make Museveni appear weak and vulnerable to more street protests and of course he does not want to compromise his powers.

The second option is to face down the Kabaka and forcefully block his visit. This carries its own risks! The organisers of Saturday's event had put the kingdom's credibility on the line. They might not back down easily.

Elements towards a Way Forward: (Short term and long term plans)

Dialogue, Christian forgiveness and reconciliation

Ethical and civic education especially for the youth, law enforcers etc.

Long term plans for building sustainable justice and peace in Uganda

Reading the warning signs and plan strategically for the forth coming political elections and the future of the nation.

Role of the Church

Given the critical situation, the Inter Religious Council of Churches led by the Archbishop of Kampala His Grace Ciprian Kizito, had convened a national conference from 10-12, Sept. 09; with the theme of "Search for Sustainable National Reconciliation, Justice and Peace at all levels." The exact day when the conference commenced, is when flesh violence erupted between the Kabaka and the central government. The Delegates are working strenuously to find solutions

to the impasse of violence, conflict, lack of forgiveness, bad governance, a divide and rule approach to power, non-participatory approaches in leadership and other elements that lead to injustice and other vices.

Conclusion

The situation is bad and may escalate. While any form of wisdom is welcomed, prayers are greatly appreciated.

Compiled by Evelyn Namakula Mayanja, Deputy Director, JPII PJ Centre, Kampala, September 12th 2009



President Museveni & the Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi / Some pictures from the riot



Youth riots and the destructions created



One of the boys who was shot