

A Christian Response to Violence: Lessons to Learn from Students in Africa/ Kenya Urbana 2015

Main texts: Acts 4:23-31 and Mathew 10:28-32

By Joseph Kamau Muthua- FOCUS-KENYA

The scope:

Kenya has had great moments in terms of peace and harmony with the other religions. We really thank God and also be deliberate in pursuing peace. Thinking of the current situation, where there has been attacks to local Churches and also to one of the IFES groups we will be asking ourselves various questions: how do we react to this? What do these challenges bring? What is the aftermath of the attack? What lessons have been learnt? How much should Christians endure and is there any limit that Christians cannot go? Amidst of many voices how do we respond to this and more? Can the gospel be preached amidst hardships? In which conditions has the gospel been preached and should the gospel be preached? The challenge has not only being experienced in Kenya, but also in other African countries in various ways and forms.

The outline

1. Introduction- my story
2. Appreciating the current scenarios mainly in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Rwanda
3. Lessons learnt and reflections
4. The call to be involved
5. Conclusion

Introduction

- My story of students ministry- Annual Missions- challenges as we did preach
- My Story as a missionary in Southern Sudan for one year
 - Infrastructure- no roads, telephone, mobile, post office those days
 - No communication- once in a blue moon- unreliable- challenging to keep friends
 - Security- gun shots every day, everyone had a gun
 - Sharing the gospel in risky and uncomfortable areas
 - One can die any time- questioned by dad and my response was “one can die in Nairobi (capital city) or in Southern Sudan (mission field)” – death happens in all areas
- Now the insecurity issue has come too close to us in Kenya, and you do not need to travel to be insecure or face violence because of your faith- violence is where we are- new trend
- This is not only in Kenya but also in some African countries and also in the world because of the threat of Al- Shabab and Isis

Appreciating the current Kenyan Scenario

- The Church in Kenya
- The Student Scenes

Background

- Since the Operation Linda Nchi (protect the country) began, Al-Shabaab vowed retaliation against the Kenyan authorities and therefore we have seen a significant and increasing number of terrorist attacks in Kenya by recent, young and overzealous converts to Islam. Because of poverty they become easier targets for the outfit's recruitment activities
- Because the Kenyan insurgents have a different profile from the Somali and Arab militants that allows them to blend in with the general population of Kenya, they are also often harder to track.

Timeline of the attacks on churches

2010

- **June 13-** Grenade attack on a prayer rally at Uhuru Park in Nairobi kills seven and injures 100

2011

- In November 2011, Al-Shabaab attacked several other locations including the East African Pentecostal Church, a military convoy, and a Holiday Inn hotel. The militant group is suspected of carrying out nine attacks in Kenya in December 2011; some of the attacks resulted in injuries and casualties while some resulted in no injuries.^[17]

2012

January – June

- On Sunday, 29 April 2012, around 8:50am, an attack took place at God's House of Miracles Church at Ngara Estate in Nairobi. As reported by one of the dailies, an attacker, who goes by the name Amar, entered the church and left. He later came back and took a seat in the back, hurling the grenade at worshippers while they had been called by the pastor to the pulpit. The experts said that the grenade used had been made in China. One person died and 11 people were admitted at Kenyatta National Hospital.

July – December

- On 1 July at around 10:15 am EAT, masked gunmen attacked two churches (the Central Catholic Cathedral and AIC churches) simultaneously in Garissa, located approximately 140 kilometres from the Somali border. The assailants killed seventeen people and left fifty injured. The churches are 3 kilometres apart and the dead included two police officers, four men, nine women and two children.
- The North Eastern Police Provincial Officer (PPO) Philip Ndolo reported that the gunmen *attacked the two policemen first and took their firearms* before they proceeded to attack the churches. The attackers used pistols to shoot the policemen at point blank range and then snatched their G3 rifles which were later used to shoot at the AIC church worshippers indiscriminately.
- No shooting was reported at the Catholic's Central Cathedral but a hand grenade was set off resulting in less casualties than the AIC attack.

- The Supreme Muslim Council (SUPKEM) in Kenya warned of a misinterpretation of this attack as a religious war against the Christians. On 30 September, at around 10:30am, a 9-year-old boy was killed when a grenade was hurled towards Sunday school children at St Polycarp Anglican Church along Juja road in Nairobi.
- Additionally, Sheikhs with the CPK threatened to sue the military commanders for crimes against humanity committed during the operation. Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) Bishops also urged Kenyans to resist engaging in violence, and instead to report offences to the relevant authorities.
- On 4 November, a policeman has been killed and 10 people were injured in a grenade attack on a church in Kenya.

2013

July—December

- On 21 September 2013, armed gunmen attacked the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, killing at least 69 people and injuring more than 175.
- The attack was thought to be orchestrated by extremists against non-Muslim Kenyans and Westerners in the area.

2014

- Mppeketoni attacks- On 16 June at least 48 people were killed when suspected Al-Shabab militants from Somalia stormed into a Kenyan coastal town and launched a major assault on a police station, hotels and government offices, officials said- mostly the Christians were the victims. Coastal island and popular tourist resort of Lamu, late on Sunday.
- Buses in Mandela- In late 2014, two attacks believed to have been carried out by Al Shabaab killed 64 persons in Mandera County. On 22 November 2014, gunmen attacked a bus traveling from Mandera to Nairobi, killing 28 persons, mostly teachers and government workers heading to Nairobi for the December holidays.
- Quarry workers- On 2 December 2014, Al-Shabaab militants attacked and killed a further 36 quarry workers, many of whom were non-Muslims, near Mandera Town.

2015

Appreciating Garissa University Students Terror Attack

- On 2 April 2015, gunmen stormed the Garissa University College in Garissa, Kenya, killing 148 people, and injuring 79 or more.
- 70% of the CU members died in the attack
- The militant group and Al-Qaeda offshoot, Al-Shabaab, which the gunmen claimed to be from, took responsibility for the attack. The gunmen took over 700 students hostage, freeing Muslims and killing those who identified as Christians. The siege ended the same day, when all four of the attackers were killed. Five men were later arrested in connection with the attack, and a bounty was placed for the arrest of a suspected organizer.
- The attack was the deadliest in Kenya since the 1998 United States embassy bombings, and is the second deadliest overall, with more casualties than the 2002 Mombasa attacks,

the 2013 Westgate shopping mall attack, the 2014 Nairobi bus bombings, the 2014 Gikomba bombings, the 2014 Mpeketoni attacks and the 2014 Lamu attacks

- For us to note the Christian Students who had gone for morning glory- seeking the Lord. A tradition in Kenyan CUs- begins earlier or at 5-6am
- 22/27 who were in the prayer room passed
- Man shot people who were in a circle praying- after personal prayers- corporate prayers



Garissa 1

Location of Garissa town in Kenya

Lecture Hall Morning Prayer meeting- from 5am



Massacre near the hostels/dorms



The mourning and the burial of the victims



The aftermath of the attack- a clip

<https://www.facebook.com/focus.enya/videos/535072666647138/>

Appreciating the Ugandan Martyrs

Brief History of the Martyrs in Uganda

"Here is a number of men and boys who, within a few years from first hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, have courage to live and die by its paradox: 'Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it.'" They were 22 Martyrs.



An Artist's impression of the Holocaust at Namugongo, 3rd June 1886

Charles Wanga

Aged 25 years. As he was being burnt, Charles said to Ssenkoole, "It is as if you are pouring water on me. Please repent and become a Christian like me". Can you release me so that I can re-arrange the firewood?

The Martyrs were killed between 1885 and 1887 by Kabaka (King) Mwanga of Buganda in the South of Uganda; 13 of the martyrs were burnt to death at Namugongo

Denis Ssebuggwawo

He was a page of king Muteesa I and a page in personal attendance of Kabaka Mwanga II. He was tortured and speared by king Mwanga II before handing him over to executioner Mpinga Kaloke on the evening of Tuesday 25th May 1886. On Wednesday morning 26th May 1886, Mpinga ordered his two men; Matembe and Mulyowa to hack the boy of 16 years into pieces.

Lessons from the Martyrs in Uganda

- It should cause us to reflection and examine ourselves
- Have a renewed commitment to causes we are committed to? What are we committed to?
- People of all ages can be committed to something- need of involvement in suffering for the Gospel- For Christ
- The blood of the martyrs is the seed for Christians
- Their faith caused them to die

Appreciating Rwandan Genocide

- From April to July 1994, members of the Hutu ethnic majority in the east-central African nation of Rwanda murdered as many as 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi minority.
- Begun by extreme Hutu nationalists in the capital of Kigali, the genocide spread throughout the country with staggering speed and brutality, as ordinary citizens were incited by local officials and the Hutu Power government to take up arms against their neighbours.
- By the time the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front gained control of the country through a military offensive in early July, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were dead and many more displaced from their homes.
- The RPF victory created 2 million more refugees (mainly Hutus) from Rwanda, worsening what had already become a full-blown humanitarian crisis.

Rwandan Genocide

The grave for the victims of Rwandan Massacre



The skulls of the victims of Rwandan Massacre



Appreciating The Nigerian Boko Haram

- **Boko Haram** is an Islamic extremist group based in north-eastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon.^[4] The group's leader is Abubakar Shekau. The group had alleged links to al-Qaeda, but in March 2015, it announced its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).^{[11][12]} Since the current insurgency started in 2009, it has killed 20,000 and displaced 2.3 million from their homes.
- After its founding in 2002, Boko Haram's increasing radicalization led to a violent uprising in July 2009 in which its leader was summarily executed. Its unexpected resurgence, following a mass prison break in September 2010, was accompanied by increasingly sophisticated attacks, initially against soft targets, and progressing in 2011 to include suicide bombings of police buildings and the United Nations office in Abuja.
- Of the 2.3 million people displaced by the conflict since May 2013, at least 250,000 have left Nigeria and fled into Cameroon, Chad or Niger.^[18] Boko Haram killed over 6,600 in 2014.^{[19][20]} The group have carried out mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276

schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014. Corruption in the security services and human rights abuses committed by them have hampered efforts to counter the unrests.

- They want to take over Nigeria- Abuja declaration-

Boko Haram in Nigeria



Kidnappings



- Would you be silent if your daughter was missing?
- Much more than our time allows or we may not be aware of – other examples?

Lessons and Theological reflections

- Gospel and violence- why?
- The theology of the third cheek
- Handling aliens- Loving, caring and blessing the aliens
- OT war versus NT war and their implications

Implications and results

- Fear:
- Lack of involvement
- Confusion
- More faith
- Boldness to share our faith
- Strategies for security in our fellowships-

- Training on dealing with terrorists- hide, run and fight
- Security Checks in churches and CUs
- Mission target area changes- but some are bold enough to still go to those risky areas
- The threat of Non-local civil servants- (teachers; a threat to tent making) in a bid to send a strong message to the Kenya Government that it must withdraw its soldiers from Somalia.

“I fear Shabaab, but I love my pupils so much I can’t leave” by Ms Monica

- Ms Monica Muhoro of Mansabubu Primary School, about 120 kilometres from Garissa.
- “My family were justifiably concerned over my safety but they couldn’t understand the power of the innocent faces of my little Class One pupils whose future is in my hands and that of other teachers.”
- “After the Mandera attack, teachers in our school became so restless due to the area’s proximity to the border with Somalia. None of my colleagues turned up for the second term fearing for their lives, forcing me to handle all classes just to make sure pupils at least had one or two lessons per day and hoping that things would get better soon but that has not happened,” says the soft spoken teacher from Nyandarua County.
- Ms Muhoro says her teaching is a call from God to mould responsible citizens for the future.
- “If we abandon these young souls now at their hour of need, we shall make them more vulnerable to embracing bad ideology out of desperation for knowledge,” she said. Ms Muhoro says that her lowest moment as a teacher was when terrorists raided Garissa University College and massacred 142 people, the majority of them students.
- “I pray hard every day to God to keep me safe from the hands of anybody who wants to harm me unjustly. I believe my prayers won’t fail me as I’m serving to shape the future of innocent children.” (Daily Nation August 15, 2015)
- Great support from IFES family- prayers and financial
- Support of School fees from France embassy in Nairobi for the 109 who survived the attacks (Star Newspaper 11 December 2015)

The call to be involved even in the worst places

- Great testimonies of God’s preparation, protection and care- Chairman, Patron, more prayers and fasting (appeared weak because of that but was in the mortuary) and many getting saved before the attack
- Gospel has progressed in persecution- Christ; Stephen, Peter and Paul
- Fear of death- our security and assurance gives us boldness to go. For me to live is Christ and to die is a gain Philippians 1:21
- The call/package of salvation involves joys and suffering or being persecuted for Christ: why then should we suffer or go through trials:
 - We have a living hope- this hope needs to be tested- through trials our faith is proved genuine and results in praise to God

- The bi-product/result is growth- more better- No giving up!
- **Phil 1:29** for it has been *granted to you on behalf of Christ* not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him- not only the *privilege of trusting* in Christ but also the *privilege of suffering* for him
- 1 Peter 1:6 suffering comes so that your faith- which is of greater worth than gold- which perishes though refined by fire- may be *proved genuine* and may *result in praise honour when Jesus Christ is revealed* (when you stand the result will be evident)- more refined- no whether you know God
- Quote: “*when gold is melted, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Steel is tempered or strengthened by heating it in fire. In the same way, our trials, struggles and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God. When you go through tough times, ask God to teach you his lessons and to show you how to use your experience to glorify him. And remember if you are being tried by fire, your faith is valuable to God*” (1st Peter IVP Commentary)
- Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you Mathew 5:11-12
- Revelation 6:9-11 “*then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed* ”
- Get involved in going, praying and giving towards such areas- ask God to fill us with

References

- Kenyan- Daily Nation Newspapers 2015
- Wikipedia downloads 2015
- Kenyan- Star Newspaper 2015
- The 1 Peter Commentary by IVP
- Online down loads from Wikipedia
- FOCUS KENYA recordings and clips