

Update 11 februari

Hallo,

Thursday last week was a superb day. Shiny and calm and the city of Kisumu was just getting out of the three days of riots and looting never seen before in the city. The whole town was a no go zone with gangs of youth numbering between 200 - 500 at any one corner of the town targetting homes and looting property indiscriminately. One loud bang followed by another and another meant a house was being broken into. Loud wailing from the occupants could be heard while they cried and begged for mercy to which no one gave an ear. Property worth thousands could be seen carried by the youth on their shoulders walking all the way to the slums. Stollen property. We watched sillently from the windows of our houses not knowing whether your house was the next target. as if that was not enough, the houses were razed down, huge ball fires went up the skies and the crowds could be heard chearing, classing and chanting in praise of their political leaders. It was like in the movies. This indeed did not look real to the eyes. I thought it was just one big dream hopping that when i wake up it will be gone. No, it was real, Hollywood playing live in this beautifull lake side city. Gun shots rent the air meanwhile as the overwhelmed police run battles with the mobs. Defeated to control and bring order to the mayhem, they could be seen to stand and watch as the bobs did damage. The security system was overpowered. At the end of the day, the damage was massive, smoke, fire from burning tyres, houses and human bodies brought a strange smell in the air around the city, yet the reason for the riots that day which was the assasination of one member of parliament by a policeman still remained a reality. Honourable Too was dead.

Friday morning and the gangs regroup again to start the days bussiness. All roads in and out of town are blocked. Fires are lite all over and the looting continues. We wake up early in the morning wondering what the day holds for us. My wife Philomena decides that she wants to go to TEMAK. She then walks thru the slums and the mess to the centre. After ababout and hour, i feel a strong urge to also join her. I know how risky it is to drive since the mobs burn peoples cars and indeed hundreds have been burnt and are lying by the road side. I finally decide to drive in the small paths in the slums upto the TEMAK centre. half way thru, i run into the dangerous mob, they all searge forward to wards the car shoulting and raising up their dangerous weapons. I get out of the car and get the courage to speak to them and tell them that i am with them in this pain, some starts to bang the car as if to get the others to get it on fire. Others start shacking it with the urge to overturn it and set it on fire. I am quickly talking to the perceived gang leaders ignoring what is happening to the car and as if God was speaking, some in the crowd start shouting "That is Baba TEMAK leave him alone". (Baba means Father in Kiswahili) They demand for money which i gladly give the leaders and they give me a clear passage to the centre. This esperience tought me that when death confronts you, it stops some of the functions of your body because when i got into the safety of the centre did i start sweating and panicking as i thought of the consequences that might have followed if i was not Baba TEMAK. God is good. Gun shots and running battles continued as we locked ourselves in the office wispering in low tones watching the gangs walk past with looted property.

A loud bang, a second and a third sounded too close at about 12 midday. It was our immediate neighbours houses door being broken. We pipped out of the windowand sow hundreds of youth rushing in and wlking out with whatever items they could carry, beds, mattresses, electronics, cutlery etc were all going into the slums. Boys as young as 14 were in the mob. Women too were part of it. Everyone from the slums was out for a take. It did not seem or look real. It was painfull and shamefull at the same time. It was horrifying and frigtening because we were sensing danger. With horific speed, they had done what they came to do. The old women wailed, cried and begged for mercy. It was a painfull time seing all her 21 years of hard work go into the hands of thugs.

Her begging and please came too late. One gang leader shouted at her to shut up or else they burn her house down. e were all at this moment standing at the gate of our office watching and conversing with some of the gang members and watching our neighbour in pain even trying to console her at one point when she moved closer to us. The Police were nowhere. Sensing danger, we decided to call for help. I called two of my friends to try and contact the police to come to the area and help as more houses were being targetted. The police hotlines were not going thru. My wife Philomena called all her colleagues who gave her numbers of policemen to call. We all run out of airtime but hoped our efforts could creat attention.

Little did we know that we were targetted by the mobs. At exactly 3 p.m, the gang leaders walked into our compound thru the fence. They beat up with stones our security guard a commotion that alerted us that their was danger outside. Philomena jumped out of the office to confront the gang who were chassing the bleading guard into the office. She boldly facd them and asked them to calm and let us talk about their grievinces. They chased the guard passed her as i walked by the door and the guard

ran into the office and looked himself in. The mob was demanding for his blood as I stood in their way at the door. They all had crude weapons and were threatening to harm me if I did not give them the guard whom they claim had abused them. The compound was filling up and Philomena was busy using all her energies to calm the crowd down. As they tried to push me off the door, I recognized one of the gang leaders and called him by name. I jumped off the door to avoid being hit by a sharp object one of the gangs flung at me and they went for the door hitting it twice with blunt objects and then I heard gun shots so close and my body went cold as if I had been hit. The mob ran in all directions. The police had just arrived outside our fence. We ran quickly to open the gate for them as the mob tried to find any small space to get out of the compound. The police quickly identified one of the gang leaders they claimed was a dangerous criminal and aimed to shoot him. Philomena raised her hands in the air and begged the police not to shoot anyone within the compound. She actually went in front of the policeman making it difficult for him to shoot the criminal. The officer then raised the barrel of his gun in the air and shot several times in anger as he shouted loud to Philomena "do you want me to let them loot this place? I will not allow them to loot this place". He shot again 7 times in the air in anger as Philomena begged him not to spill blood within the compound and pursue the mob outside the compound.

What a day. I have never had gun shots that close.

That night with security escort and in the cover of the night, we decided to pack most essential equipments from the centre and move them to our house. Hopefully they will be safe. How long to move to the city of Hope? how we pray that the very few essential items like electricity, septic tank, Pit latrine, meter house etc could be finalized. In all things, we thank God.

Joab and Philomena

Hallo,

Hope all is well with you. Our country continues to have turmoil and deaths are increasing daily. The suffering of our people is also on the rise. Apart from getting food and other support out to the people, we want to establish a medical camp at our land where we are building our new centre in Kisumu. We are looking at temporarily using tents which we can hire and if we have some finances, get medicines etc and volunteer nurses and doctors to help treat people. We will then identify those that are in medical need to come and get treatment. All the internally displaced in the slums of Kisumu will be served. Our hospitals currently have outstretched their medical supplies. It is from this camp that we intend to do medical outreach to the surrounding areas and the smaller towns that are badly affected but are not being attended to. I visited an area two days ago where the village clinic has never been operational since the 24th of December. Their only cry is for medication since they are ailing. I met a group of women who are HIV+ that have not been able to access ARVs for the last two weeks and are at the verge of hopelessness since they are supposed to continue with their medication. The displacement and the conditions in the country has made it difficult hence lives that were already blooming will soon be lost. I witnessed a young man being pushed in a wheel barrow supposedly being taken to a traditional herbalist. Too weak to talk, he raised his head and uttered a few words to me, "Please don't let me die, I am only suffering from Malaria". 50 meters away, an old woman was walking towards a shop. Half bent and using a stick to help carry her along. She was another victim of 4 days of Diarrhea and vomiting. She was dragging herself to buy some pain killers. We then visited a child who seemed to be suffering from pneumonia. She had problems in breathing and had not eaten for two days and in serious pain. Humbled by the situation, we laid our hands on her and with tears in our eyes prayed to God to intervene.

Algera, do you think the Rotarians and their Rotary Clubs can support us get a vehicle or hire one for the outreach program? Do you think they can support our medical goals? Do you think they can help us acquire small equipments that can make our temporary camps well equipped and the outreach team well equipped for this task? I write you this email with tears in my eyes and with so much pain for our people. I thought I had seen suffering but this is indeed unbearable. I am learning that to be disaster prepared is one thing we need to work on. I am praying that we will one day have a facility that will be prepared for any disaster medically as TEMAK. Please, please, we pray and request for support and we know that God will bless those who will willingly give towards the needs of our people.

Thanks,

Joab