

From Jesuit Hakimani Centre, 4th January 2008

The **aftermath of the Kenyan elections** has divided the country and left more than **300 people dead** and scores of persons injured and their property destroyed. The hotly contested presidential elections were mostly between the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) candidate Raila Odinga. Just before the announcement of the results by the electoral commission of Kenya (ECK) the ODM claimed the government had rigged the elections and altered some of the figures from the constituencies in favour of president Kibaki. As a result Kibaki 'won' the elections with 4.5million votes against Raila's 4.3million. **The votes were immediately disputed** by the opposition and sporadic riots begun throughout the country (except in Central and Eastern Kenya where the president has a large support).

Subsequently Kenya has witnessed a level of violence never seen before. It is totally unacceptable. There are serious doubts on the manner in which the ECK handled the whole tallying process. The election went on very well with a large turnout, the counting process at the voting stations was smooth but **the final tallying of the results in Nairobi were tampered with** and the opposition, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) claimed they had all the evidence and copies of the original documents indicating the number of votes from constituencies before they were tallied...it's a broad daylight robbery, they claimed. The opposition candidate Raila had a clear lead and large majority of votes from 6 out of 8 provinces just as the opinion polls had shown before elections.

The current violence has taken different dimensions: election grievances, robbery and stealing, as well as something close to ethnic cleansing of the Kikuyus especially in the Rift Valley. **People are settling old grievances:** there have always been tensions in the settlement areas in the Rift Valley between Kikuyus and the Kalenjins (the indigenous occupants of the region). The Kikuyus were brought into these areas after independence following their displacements by colonialists who took their land and put up coffee and tea plantations. Because the issue has never been solved in the last forty years, and given that it was made worse by the then President Moi (himself from Rift Valley) in 1992 and 1997 elections by inciting the Kalenjins to kick out Kikuyus who were unlikely to vote for him, the situation has always remained volatile.

We pray for an amicable solution, there is a lot of pressure on the government and opposition, internally and internationally. The president has issued a statement calling for a national reconciliation and asked the opposition to go to court to protest the election results rather than let their supporters continue to cause havoc. **The ODM are willing to dialogue as long as an international mediator comes in.** The current proposal for a mediator is on President Kufuor of Ghana who is also the chairman of African Union. The government has been hesitant to accept an international mediator.

The opposition organized a million person rally on January 3rd which failed to take off because of the heavy police presence. Demonstrators rioted and some destroyed properties. ODM says the rallies will continue.

The Catholic Church just issued a statement on Jan 3rd calling for peace and reconciliation [see Documents section of this website], an audit of the election results and mediation between Kibaki and Raila.

Jesuit Hakimani Centre is in solidarity with the Bishops' Letter and is working on the following:

- a) Advocating in collaboration with Church and civil institutions for an immediate end to the violence and destruction of life and property.**
- b) Working out a mechanism for immediate material and spiritual assistance of the victims of violence.**
- c) Supporting initiatives for mediation and reconciliation between the major parties.**
- d) Working with others in searching for a long term solution to this crisis at two levels:**
 - i) encouraging Reconciliation and a vision for national unity;**
 - ii) lobbying for governing structures that ensure transparency in the electoral process.**

NB. There will be a meeting this Sunday (6th January) of a few Jesuits to look at the way forward and what could be our contribution.

We continue to pray for peace and an amicable solution.

Peace,
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