

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARCHBISHOP OF YORK VISIT TO KENYA

DR. JOHN SENTAMU'S TOUR – FEBRUARY 8 – 11, 2008



The Church of England Archbishop of York Dr. John Sentamu completed his 4-day successful visit to Kenya on Monday evening with a message of hope and optimism to Kenyans as they await the outcome of the former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan-led mediation talks and the Church continues to preach the message of forgiveness, reconciliation and transformation.

Archbishop Sentamu who is also a member of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom arrived on 8th January 2008, to have a first hand unfettered insight of the prevailing situation in the country after violence broke out following the disputed 27th December 2007 presidential election results. Upon return to England he was to brief the head of the Church, Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

During his busy schedule Dr. Sentamu, who actually comes from Uganda, visited displaced people in various camps in Mt. Kenya South, Nyanza and Rift Valley regions, held discussions with both Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Party of National Unity (PNU) leaders respectively. He was the main preacher during the 9.30am, 11.30am and 6.00pm Sunday services at the All Saints cathedral, Nairobi. He had an audience with President Mwai Kibaki on the evening of Monday, 11th January before his departure.

Members of Dr. Sentamu entourage included his host Archbishop of Kenya, The Most Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi, Nairobi Diocesan Bishop Peter Njoka, Thika Diocesan Bishop Dr. Gideon Githiga, Mt. Kenya South Diocesan Bishop Timothy Ranji, Provincial Secretary Bishop Lawrence Dena, Acting Provost Rev David Sawe, CAPA Acting General Secretary Rev. Joyce Kariuki and Job Githinji, the ACK Communications Officer.

On arrival in Kenya Archbishop Sentamu was briefed on the genesis of the prevailing crisis how neighbours turned against one another for no reason other than that they were from different ethnic communities or political affiliations.

Apparently the December 2007 general elections presidential results triggered an orgy of violence resulting in death of more than 1,000 people, rape, arson, plunder, a looming economic crisis, displacement of more than 300,000 people and the kind of ethnic hatred that Kenyans thought was alien to their country.

On the first day of arrival Dr. Sentamu toured Kirathimo camp in the diocese of Mt Kenya south where there are about 3,000 displaced people for allegedly belonging to a different community



In the afternoon of the same day the Archbishop's entourage held discussions at Pentagon house with the ODM luminaries led by Hon. Raila Odinga, Professor Anyang' Nyongo, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru and others.

Hon. Raila updated the group on the ground covered in search for peace and the issues raised towards resolving the political crisis assailing the country and finding a lasting solution to the fundamental problems under discussion by mediators from both sides of political divide. He said the two teams were committed to the talks. The country however needed humanitarian assistance.

Archbishop Sentamu expressed optimism with the Kofi Annan led mediation talks and urged the party leaders to give Kenyans hope. They should put the interests of Kenya first and rise above barriers that could affect the talks.

He advocated for a strong government and a strong opposition which would check against possible excesses by the government.

Expressing solidarity with the people of Kenya, Dr. Sentamu who is also a lawyer by profession having served in Uganda during President Idd Amin regime promised to take up the issue of humanitarian assistance upon his return to England

He said it pained him to see Kenya, a country seen in the East African region as a leading democracy suffering so much.



On Saturday, Dr Sentamu met PNU leaders Hon. Martha Karua the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Finance Minister Hon. Amos Kimunya and Hon. Danson Mungatana an Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

Hon. Karua gave Dr Sentamu's group a file containing an executive summary of the correct position in regard to the Presidential election results and the analyzed official records of the Electoral Commission of Kenya used in responding to the opposition claims that the election was rigged in favour of President Kibaki.

She gave figures of post election violence casualties of the people killed, civilians murdered, armed raiders killed, police killed on duty, houses burnt, government vehicle burnt, suspects arraigned in court, suspects arrested and cases finalized.

The minister took issue with international community for taking the view that power sharing was the way forward saying this would be tantamount to promoting the principle that violence is acceptable means of capturing power. This, she said would undermine the tenets of democracy

She said electoral disputes should be taken to court which should not be demonized by anybody who claims the courts are filled with cronies of a certain political personality. The Archbishop however noted that the stipulated time to file a suit on the disputed presidential results was over. He was hopeful that the talks led by Annan would yield acceptable results. The team deserves support, encouragement and commendation. The solutions to the various issues that are being discussed by the mediators should be based on justice and truth

He said his coming to Kenya was to show solidarity with the people of Kenya and violence victims, pass a message of hope and peace to the nation and pray for all Kenyans affected in one way or another.

Once again he promised to seek for humanitarian intervention particularly for the displaced people in camps

Violence should not be countered with violence and that the nation needed healing and reconciliation.

Preaching at the All Saints Cathedral on Sunday Dr. Sentamu urged both sides of the political divide to give Kenyans hope and carry the ongoing talks to a fruitful end while at the same time ensuring that the gains made in the country democracy such as multi-party-ism are guarded.

As the two parties work together, Kenyans should ensure that a strong opposition thrives to check any government excesses.

He said Kenya was capable of rising from the prevailing state of affairs as long as truth and justice prevails and Kenyans themselves are committed to peace.

On Monday, the group flew to Kisumu in Nyanza Province where the area Provincial commissioner Mr. Paul Olando and his security team gave a brief situation analysis of the crisis and the steps taken to step the violence.

The PC commended the Anglican Church of Kenya for her humanitarian intervention which included counseling and other concerns. Bishop Francis M. Abiero and officials from his Maseno South diocese and IDCCS were present during the courtesy call on the PC.

The PC said the skirmishes in the province had greatly subsided and the people now understand that dialogue carried more weight than violence

He was delighted that Members of Parliament from various parties had embarked on visiting and preaching peace to Kenyans as they awaited results of the talks.



The group visited, prayed and consoled displaced people at St. Stephens Cathedral in Kisumu. Once again Dr. Sentamu told a press briefing that Kenya has always been seen as an economic, social and political leader in the east African region a status which could be undermined by violence. Violence must therefore be stopped.

After a brief stop-over at the NCCK Jumuia guest house in Kisumu, the group flew to Eldoret where they were met at the airport by among others Bishop Stephen Kewasis of Kitale and Bishop Kogo of Eldoret and Eldoret CCS region officials.

The group toured and witnessed the heart-rending misery at the Eldoret show ground camp which is holding thousands of internally displaced people. They saw the sheer helplessness and hopelessness of people ejected from their homes and now living in igloo-like white tents .

Using a helicopter en-route to Nairobi, the group was shocked and dismayed to see the horrible destruction and devastation caused by the violence, whole villages completely destroyed with burnt houses where neighbours had co-existed for decades and intermarried.



Dr. Sentamu's visit to Kenya was well covered by the local and international media and wherever he stopped, he gave the same message of hope to Kenyans and optimism that the talks would be successful.

Throughout the 4-day visit, Archbishop- Nzimbi who stood by Dr. Sentamu explained how the church has been involved in peace initiative by urging all in the leadership including religious, administrative and political leadership to ensure they promote peace within their localities and areas of influence.

In view of this, the church has continued to urge the public to maintain law and order to avoid any further violence and has worked with relief agencies including the government to respond to the affected areas.

Archbishop Nzimbi said the church has appealed for calm as the talks continue and that people should not take revenge as this was not the solution.

The church is in solidarity with those displaced persons and has been involved with humanitarian intervention by distributing tons and tons of relief foodstuff and clothes in various parts of the country. This has been done through the CCS, Dioceses and in joint ventures with other churches and organizations.

The Archbishop said the church has urged Kenyans to strive to practice good neighbourliness and extend help to all irrespective of their tribe, political persuasion, race and religious affiliations.

The church he said was committed to working with other likeminded organizations in building a peaceful society where people lived harmoniously.

By copy of this report, the Anglican Church of Kenya urges all her partners and friends to offer prayer and financial support towards humanitarian assistance including resettlement of the displaced people.

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