



# Uganda Calling!

## *Home and Away*

March 2017

### **Special Report: Kasese**

We want to bring you this special report on the situation that unfurled when Dave was in Kasese, Western Uganda, during February.

First, a brief bit of background to help you understand the situation there. The Bakonzo people of the Rwenzori mountains, together with the Bakonzo people of Eastern Congo, have agitated for a separate kingdom and independent country for over 100 years. Their borders were set by the colonial administrations (including the British) and bear no resemblance to historical tribal boundaries. So this is an ongoing situation which may never be resolved.

At the end of November 2016, the Uganda government and army stormed the Rwenzururu administrative offices and the Royal palace killing about 120 people, arresting many 'Royal Guards' and detaining the King on charges of treason. His case is still ongoing.

Now, for Dave, things happened which made us realise how volatile that region is, and the dangers facing the residents from the mountains. Dave's reason for being in Kasese was to speak at a conference for about 300 pastors who were coming down from the mountains. We had arranged to sleep them and to feed them and to spend four days teaching them.

On the evening before the conference was due to start, the army decided to begin an operation in the mountains to look for arms and Royal Guards that had escaped. Many pastors near to the Congo border got wind of this and decided to remain in their villages – they were fearful, and rightly so. In a different part of the mountains, the pastors did not know what was happening and in excess of 60 of them walked 14 kilometres down the mountain intending to attend the conference. They were intercepted by the army and despite having a written invite to the conference they were sent back up the mountain – apart from eight pastors who were taken by the army and beaten and tortured for 24 hours before anyone in Kasese knew what was happening. When he found out, the pastor organising the conference went with the District Police Chief to try and free the eight. They found them in an army camp very bruised and very battered. They managed to obtain the release of these eight men. Five of them were able to limp the 14 kilometres back home, but the other three needed hospital treatment, so they were taken to Kilembe hospital, not far from Kasese. They were scanned, and two of them were found to have serious kidney damage. The nearest place for them to be operated on was in Mbarara, over 100 miles away and they had to go by 'hospital van' over a very poor road. Our pastor friend arranged this and it was an expensive hire charge, there is no NHS in Uganda. The next morning, the two were operated on; one had a kidney removed and the other had surgery to tidy up the area around the kidneys. The one who had the kidney removed was in severe pain the next day and was put onto oxygen. Sadly, he died the following day.

The deceased man, Pastor Peter, leaves a pregnant wife and seven children, aged 15 down to three. Their house is still only half built, the children need school fees and his income has gone. The new baby is due early in May and then the wife will need to start a business in order to support the family.

We are doing all we can to support that family at the moment. If you are a praying person, please stand with us in prayer as the future for the family unfolds.

Please also pray for our pastor friend who had to deal with the practical fall-out from the situation. He is physically and mentally exhausted as a result of both dealing with the situation and putting himself at risk by travelling up and down the mountains. As he put it, he is now 'a family member' as he tries to support them in their grief and help them in their future.

This incident serves as a reminder to us that Christian mission can be a dangerous place, but it is what we are called to do as His people. No-one ever said it would be easy. Pastor Peter just wanted to come down the mountain to learn – instead he paid with his life. We cannot comprehend such atrocities in this country, but they are happening to our brothers and sisters worldwide. For some, it is the cost of serving the gospel.

The mountains can be a dangerous place. Please pray for the villages, churches and people there. As well as the army, they have to deal with rebel groups who come and go from the Congo. Their lives are hard enough as it is, but they always face the unexpected.

There will be more about Dave's visit in our next newsletter which will come out soon.



*Please pray on! God bless & love to you all,*

**Anona & Dave**

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