

Dear Friends,

As most of you know, we have had almost 2 years of escalating violence in the NW and SW regions of Cameroon. Many people are predicting that in the next 2-3 weeks we might see an even greater escalation of violence. October 1 is Reunification Day in Cameroon, a national holiday recognizing when French and English Cameroon became one country, but in recent years, a day of protests and violence in the English speaking regions of Cameroon. There is also a national election scheduled for October 7. Most people predict that the NW and SW regions of Cameroon will boycott the election, but there will likely be more protests and violence.

We remain safe at Mbingo even though there are many terrible things happening around the region, and we continue to get many patients wounded in the conflict. Travel has become increasingly difficult with various travel bans, increased checkpoints, a nighttime curfew, and roads blocked by separatists to prevent movement of the military. SIL, the missionary airline in Cameroon, has canceled all flights to our region. Our overall patient load has decreased because patients cannot or are afraid to travel. But the patients we get are much more complicated, many with terrible injuries and emergent conditions. Thousands of people have evacuated the NW and SW regions, unknown hundreds have been killed, dozens of villages burned or destroyed, business ruined, schools closed, and slowly an increase in shortages of food and supplies. And neither side seems willing to talk about how to peacefully resolve their differences.

Both the national army and the separatists have promised not to interfere with the function of the hospital, and they seem to be keeping those promises. We have had no major security events on the hospital compound in over 2 months. We have tried to remain neutral and take any patient who presents to us in need, regardless of who they are or how they were injured. But this gets complicated, as you might imagine.

A few days ago a group of religious leaders signed a joint declaration condemning the violence, destruction, torture, closure of schools, and many other atrocities. It was written by Protestant Christians, Roman Catholics, and Muslim clerics. It was very well written, balanced, and describes what we have seen taking place on the ground. I have attached it to this email.

Several of our surgeons and residents have relocated to other programs outside of Cameroon. We have not had any visitors in months. Even though we continue to provide patient care, and maintain all the elements of our academic program, we know that we cannot go on in this situation indefinitely. Our prayer, and we ask your prayers for the same, is that we get through the next few weeks and there will be an end to the violence, a return to peace and the ability to receive visitors, to travel safely and that our patients can get access to us. In January we are scheduled to take new residents, but the ability to take new trainees depends on having a secure place to train and having enough faculty. Many things remain uncertain at this time. But for now, we are grateful for every day we can be here. We are providing life-saving care to many people who have no other options and at a time of crisis in their lives. We are confident of God's call on our lives to be here and trust him for everything we need.

Most gratefully yours,

Jim

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