

Tuesday January 28th, 2025

Dear Friends,

It's hard to know where to start... we have had our share of evacuations in our 33 years as missionaries: Haiti during the blockade in '94, Zaire following a coup in '97 and again during a civil war in '98, Goma in 2022 when the volcano erupted leaving behind over 50,000 burned homes. We have remained during other crises where we felt our presence was needed: cholera in Haiti, Ebola in Congo, ethnic fighting in South Sudan and even providing relief efforts in Somalia. We've been serving in Goma in the DRC (Congo) for nine years and have become accustomed to the challenges, adept at meeting needs, and very attached to the people. This is our most difficult evacuation yet.

Bill and I were able to spend time in Goma before things deteriorated, even as the rebels surrounded the town. We had good meetings and contingency planning with staff. We were able to address urgent issues, secure supplies, pay school fees, and deliver items we brought in from the US.

As things deteriorated and rebel troops broke through the government and UN troops along the city limits, we were advised to leave on Friday night, before the border with Rwanda (the only path open) closed. We followed the advice of our partners and sadly in the wee hours of Sunday morning, the city of Goma was breached and fierce fighting in the streets ensued.

Eight of our teachers were able to make it to HEAL Africa where about 50 children had fled for safety... some Sunday school children but mostly street children.

They were sheltered in a Sunday school classroom until yesterday when bullets pierced the ceiling and window as fierce fighting continued in the streets around the hospital and school compound. They moved to a lower room for safety.



During the day as fighting continued in front of the HEAL Africa compound; a group of soldiers jumped the wall, threatened our staff, took phones and money and personal items... leaving them even more traumatized, but thankfully physically unhurt.

Though the city has no electricity (and therefore no water) the 5,000-liter water tanks we had recently installed were full to the top during this rainy season, which gave both the hospital and school access to water. Unfortunately, one of the tanks was hit by bullets yesterday afternoon and the water has drained out, though we still have the companion tank. Another blessing is that we had just stocked up sacks of rice and beans for the street children (EBA) program... so those who have taken refuge have been able to have one meal a day.



The home of one of our Sunday School teachers was destroyed when a bomb hit not far from the school, but thankfully he and his family were unhurt. We heard that doctors and nurses at the hospital were told to shelter under the beds due to heavy fighting in the street. The rest of our hospital and teaching staff are staying put in their homes as the incoming soldiers have instructed everyone to remain indoors; albeit without water, electricity, and food for many.

We know God is in control and are thankful for:

- Trained teachers who have a heart for the children
- Facilities funded by many of you which provide shelter for children and staff
- Food in stock because of you who support our street children (EBA) program
- The rains which come every evening to fill our 5000-liter container
- ... and hope that comes anew every morning.

Your prayers are cherished. There will be much work ahead as we prepare already to return when the fighting is over. We know that God is with these precious ones who endure yet another trial.

***If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91)***

Ann and Bill