

to put a fence around land they owned near their mosque, telling traders from the nearby slum - who had built their kiosks in the area - to vacate the land. The traders, in turn, claimed that the government land office had allocated the plots to them. A mob of traders and slum-dwellers gathered and surrounded the Muslims, and threatened to burn the mosque. But police blocked Muslim youth attempting to guard the mosque while traders broke into the mosque and started the fire, says Abubakar. "When the mob burned the mosque, the police were watching and laughing." And, when the driver of Gitari's car ran to police standing nearby to tell them that the mob was going to kill the Anglican archbishop, a police inspector said, "What did he come to do here? Let him be killed," reports Abubakar, who himself was slightly injured in the melee. [4]

"We think that there was a third force," says Abubakar. "This third force was organized by the Kenyan intelligence." He says he recognized one of the main inciters of the violence on the

Muslim side as being a policeman attired in Muslim dress.

At first, government and political party leaders appealed for calm and told people not to interpret the conflict as a religious war. However, several days later, Cabinet Minister Shariff Nassir told Muslim youth to "hit back with greater force if they are provoked because I am a leader who is ready to sacrifice myself for my people and I do not like cowards," as reported in the December 4 *Daily Nation*. [5]

"This is not the first time that the government of this country tries to play off various categories of people [against one another] for it to rule," says Akoth. Ufungamano religious leaders expressed the same sentiment in a December 1 joint statement and press conference delivered by representatives from religious bodies such as the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC), the National Council of Churches of Kenya, and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims.

Editor's Notes: [4] There is a good atmosphere between Muslims and Christians in South 'B'. Many of the thousands of 'Muslims' were bussed into South 'B' from other parts of Nairobi, especially from Eastleigh and Kibera where there are sizable Muslim communities of refugees from Somalia and other countries to the north of Kenya. 349 squatters' shacks were destroyed and in the weeks after the riots Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish helped those who had been made homeless. It is ironic that among the aid given were all the twisted corrugated iron sheets from the roof of the destroyed church and all the charred beams of the offices which were not totally destroyed. 'Callers to the Sunday Nation's news desk criticised police for failing to stop the mob of youths who torched the church. But Cabinet Minister Shariff Nassir defended the Government against claims that it was fanning the clashes to stall the Ufungamano faith-led constitutional review. Mr Nassir accused the Ufungamano House-based group of seeking to topple President Moi. Mr Nassir said the violence should not be seen as a war between Muslims and Christians, saying it had been fuelled by land grabbers.' ('82 held as churches blame riot on police', 'Sunday Nation', December 3, 2000.)

[5] This is from the article entitled 'I told Muslims to fight, says Nassir', ('Daily Nation', Monday, December 4, 2000.). It continues: 'However, he [Mr Nassir] said that his comments were not tantamount to incitement, adding that when he visited the troubled spot last week, the youths were already charged with anger. He tried to calm them down but they would not listen because they were furious at the burning of their mosque. ... "We know everyone has the right to own land, but people have no right to invade other people's land," he said. ... "There are no first class or second class citizens in Kenya. Just because we did not go to school earlier, it does not mean we are fools", he said.' The Editorial of the same day ('Nassir must not get away with this folly', 'Daily Nation', Monday, December 4, 2000.) condemned the conduct of Mr. Nassir: 'Mr Nassir's two greatest claims to prominence are precisely that he is a member of the Cabinet and a political devotee of the President's as a ruling party hard-liner. But he serves the interests of neither office when he calls press conferences to acknowledge that, yes, he did indeed add fuel to the fire of a full-scale riot in Nairobi South 'B' by telling Muslim youths "not to turn the other cheek" and to retaliate to the burning of a mosque in such a way as to outdo their perceived adversaries in the scale of the outrage perpetrated against them. ... This incoherent would-be populism is the most grievous nonsense. Mr Nassir is ready to sacrifice absolutely nothing. In fact, if every member of the Cabinet behaved the way Mr Nassir has done, and bragged about it at press conferences afterwards by speaking through both sides of their mouths, this country would be aflame from seaside coast to lakeside coast and all points North and South.'



"We strongly suspect that the violence is instigated or allowed to divert people's attention from the real problems affecting Kenyans and the urgent need to review their constitution," said the statement. "We also suspect that there could be a scheme to move from the painful ethnic clashes that have been witnessed in the past to equally devastating religious clashes in an endeavour to cause divisions in the country." The Kenya government has denied any involvement in the South 'B' fighting, and maintains that the police did their best to stop the violence. "What has the government to gain from inciting religious clashes?" Security Minister Marsden Madoka told the December 2 *Daily Nation*.

Mr Nassir's conduct is totally unacceptable. No Cabinet minister anywhere in the world, outside of a fascist regime (and there are virtually none of these left), could get away with Mr Nassir's actions and utterances of the past weekend. And if Mr Nassir does indeed get away with it, this will be a reflection not so much of his deficiencies as a leader as of the sorry state of governance and rule of law and decency in this country.

What happened at South 'B' last week is to be deeply regretted on all sides and must not happen again anywhere in the country. That a fragile peace has returned to the area and many, including Muslim and Christian clerics, have pointed out that it had nothing to do with religious differences, is thanks to community and religious leaders, MPs and other opinion shapers whose actions and utterances were the exact opposite of Mr Nassir's. Let the country hear from both the Cabinet and the President precisely what they think of Mr Nassir's one-man riot against all the norms of good governance and responsible leadership. And on this issue, silence will speak as eloquently as the most piercing shout or statement.'

Picture above: The parish church during the horrendous fire



"There is no shred of evidence. The government is not that naive."

"[Kenyan President Daniel arap] Moi has said he is not ready to go," says Akoth. "Moi has made attempts to depict all other leaders in this country as tribal leaders, that he is the only national leader. What he does is that he plays people to fight and then he's got the powers to stop the war. Then he stops the war. And then he tells people, 'look, I'm the one who can stop the war. I'm the only national leader.'"

Despite ripping inter-faith cooperation apart, the violence in South 'B' has actually brought religious leaders and faithful much

closer together, says Ibrahim Lethome, Nairobi advocate and legal council for the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims. He cites the joint statement, the Muslims' rescue of Archbishop Gitari, and upcoming plans for inter-faith prayers and events as evidence that the bond among faith groups has been strengthened. [6]

Muslims and Christians both have a key, common interest in ensuring that Kenya's constitution is changed, says Lethome. "Most of the problems affecting this country are problems that are related to morality," he says. "We believe that the churches and the mosques have a big role to play in correcting the evils and wrongs that we are seeing in society today."

Constitutional reform has been high in the minds of Kenyans, particularly this past decade. Following Kenya's first multi-party election in 1992, there was national consensus that the constitution needed to be changed to address power imbalances that result in human rights abuses, corruption, mismanagement, and other ills, and to reflect changes that have taken place

since Kenya's independence in 1964. Kenya's original constitution was drawn up in Lancaster, England, in 1963.

Just before the 1997 election, the government published a bill that would have set up a commission to hear peoples' views on constitutional reform, with the aim of changing the constitution. The opposition rejected the bill, saying that the proposed commission was not inclusive or independent enough.

Following the election, a group of parliamentarians from all political parties agreed to initiate talks that would amend the original bill. Representatives from the religious community, political parties, non-government organizations, and women's groups hammered out a draft bill, which was signed by Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and became law last October.

But when it came time to nominate representatives for the new commission, the political parties couldn't agree who to nominate, despite the best efforts of the church to reconcile the political parties. Several months later, religious

representatives tried to reconcile everyone at a meeting at Ufungamano House in Nairobi, where the Initiative was born.

For the next few months, the PCK will collect Kenyans' views concerning constitutional reform and prepare a report and draft constitution, which will be presented to a national conference next July, says Abubakar.

Constitutional changes that groups are pushing for include: separating the powers and independence of Parliament, the executive, and the judiciary; outlawing detention without trial; striking capital punishment off the books; and giving Parliament the power to impeach or force the resignation of the president.

Editor's Note: [6] In his article (Opinion: 'Let us not compromise our religious harmony', 'Daily Nation', Tuesday, January 23, 2001.) Ahmad Khalif, the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, condemns the violence in Kenya and calls for the continuation of the good inter-faith relationships in the country.

'Well aware of the need to secure religious harmony in Kenya, Supkem [the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims] abhors the growing trend in which some sects, cults and groups have taken to challenging established religions through cheap propaganda and the abuse of the mass media to vilify other faiths.

In recent times, we have witnessed a number of incidents that indicate a systematic attempt by some individuals and groups to foment religious strife in Kenya. ...

Islam stands for peace and harmony. In fact, the very word Islam is derived from the Arabic word salam, meaning peace and submission. Islam teaches complete submission to the will of Allah, the creator and true God of all existence. Sanctity of life and respect for all human beings are important teachings of Islam constituting the articles of faith.

In the recent past, there have been a number of other incidents, which the enemies of both Islam and Christianity have attempted to use in order to create animosity between the two major religious faiths in Kenya. ...

Another dispute between a mosque and illegal squatters in Nairobi's South 'B' late last year almost turned into a bloody religious war between Muslims and Christians. It was only through the concerted efforts of both Muslim and Christian religious leaders that a major catastrophe was averted. The incident in Nairobi South 'B' tested religious harmony in Kenya to the very limits as hooligans claiming adherence to the two faiths torched one mosque and two churches.

It is evident that some insidious forces have been hard at work trying to create religious strife in Kenya. But, through the trials and tribulations, religious leaders on both sides have remained united and steadfast in their pursuit of social justice. This has been particularly evident in their working together in the constitution reform process.

The main interest of both Muslim and Christian religious leaders in the review process is to secure the best possible constitution through an all-inclusive, objective and people-led process. The main goal is to achieve a transparent, just, democratic and accountable system of governance.

The constitutional process must inherently recognise the sovereignty of the people of Kenya to choose the way in which they are to be governed. Any new constitutional dispensation must recognise and guarantee the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all the citizens.'



SOURCES: AMECEA Documentation Service, P.O. Box 21400, Nairobi, Kenya. (<http://www.amecea.org/body.htm>); Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org/index.html> and <http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/countries/>); Catholic Missionary Union of England and Wales Fact Sheet on Kenya (http://www.cmu.org.uk/stats/afff_ken.htm); 'The CIA - The World Factbook 2000 - Kenya <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ke.html>); 'The Daily Nation On the Web' ('The Daily Nation' & 'The Sunday Nation'), Nairobi, Kenya (<http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/Today/index.html>); 'Ethnologue: Languages of the World', 13th Edition; Barbara F. Grimes, Editor; Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1996. (<http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Keny.html>); Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/hrw/>); 'International Fides Service' (No 4150-NE 299), 28th. May, 1999, Palazzo 'de Propaganda Fide', Via di Propaganda 1c - 00187- Roma, Italy; (<http://www.fides.org/English/1999/e19990528.html>); Kenyaweb (<http://www.kenyaweb.com/index.html>); NewAfrica', Kenya Profile (<http://www.newafrica.com/kenyaprofile.htm>); UNICEF (<http://www.unicef.org/>) and 'The State of the World's Children 2001'; SuttonLink Fact Sheet on Kenya On the Kenyan (http://www.thewhitefathers.org.uk/ke_fct.html); The Kenyan Constitution: <http://kenyansabroad.org/organization/constitution.html> and <http://www.rcbowen.com/kenya/constitution>.

Picture above: The ruins of the parish church



Some Background Information on Kenya

Compiled by Fr. Bill Turnbull W.F

BASIC INDICATORS

Total Population	29,549,000
Population under-5	4,462,000
Population under-18	15,127,000
Annual no. of births	992,000
GNP per Capita	US\$360

LANGUAGES, ETHNIC GROUPS AND RELIGIONS

Ethnic Groups: There are over 70 ethnic groups in Kenya which can be divided into three major linguistic groups. They are: the **Bantu** such

as the Bukusu, Embu, Kamba 11%, Kikuyu 22%, Kisii 6%, Kuria, Luhya 14% and the Meru 6%; the **Nilotes** such as the Iteso, Kalenjin (Kipsigis, Nandi, Keiyo, Tugen) 12%, Luo 13%, Marakwet, Maasai and the Samburu; and the **Cushites** such as the Boran, Rendille, and the Somali.

There are also non-African (Asian, European and Arab) 2%.

Languages: English and Swahili are the official languages

FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE KENYAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

DIOCESE	AREA (2)	POPULATION	CATHOLICS	FRS (3)	BROS (4)	SRS (5)	SEMS (6)
Bungoma	4,840	1,376,899	418,693	39	21	99	55
Eldoret	15,645	2,380,000	486,000	89	19	203	68
Embu	2,714	500,000	164,000	37	2	40	43
Garissa	168,353	600,000	21,400	21	7	17	2
Homa Bay	7,778	1,648,000	340,449	38	24	311	40
Isiolo	25,605	200,000	19,245	24	3	33	6
Kakamega	3,517	1,735,704	238,332	54	12	278	70
Kericho	4,600	1,297,000	194,327	20	7	23	25
Kisii	2,196	1,250,000	302,135	18	8	90	35
Kisumu (1)	6,419	1,695,000	347,700	54	13	156	29
Kitale	7,233	640,000	130,000	33	8	72	24
Kitui	36,246	900,000	124,350	39	14	58	42
Lodwar	70,000	250,000	25,000	30	4	44	12
Machakos	15,183	1,801,269	407,117	100	43	87	117
Marsabit	103,000	360,000	43,547	44	8	72	24
Meru	35,527	1,427,238	676,252	104	18	272	101
Military	---	32,000	13,163	15	---	---	---
Mombasa (1)	38,000	2,000,000	220,000	78	7	204	30
Murang'a	4,016	1,438,859	563,311	57	14	122	42
Nairobi (1)	3,271	4,200,000	1,100,000	542	749	895	60
Nakuru	18,149	1,634,254	302,000	90	33	293	64
Ngong	47,000	600,000	82,651	54	32	99	17
Nyeri (1)	16,529	1,203,250	532,286	116	31	196	98
Totals	682,821	29,169,473	6,751,958	1,696	1,077	3,664	1,004



'Facts and Figures on the Kenyan Catholic Church' FootNotes: (1) Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi and Nyeri are Archdiocese; (2) the areas are in square kilometres (sq.km.), 1 sq.km. is 0.3861 of a statute square mile; (3) priests; (4) brothers; (5) sisters; (6) major seminarians; for sources see page 13.

Religions: Christianity 66% (RC 28%), Trad. Religions 26%, Muslim 7%, Others 1%.

MORTALITY RATES

Infant mortality rate (1)	76
Under-5 mortality rate (1)	118
Under-5 mortality rank	37
Annual no. of under-5 deaths	117,000
% Oral Rehydration (ORT) use	69
Life Expectancy	51 years
Maternal Mortality Ratio (2)	590

SAFE WATER AND ADEQUATE SANITATION

% of population with access to

	water	sanitation
Urban	87	96
Rural	31	81
Total	49	86

POLITICS

The Chief of State and Head of Government is President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi (since 14th. October, 1978). The President is elected from the members of the National Assembly for a five-year term. The last election was held on the 29th. December, 1997, and the next is due in 2003. The Constitution is from the 12th. December, 1963, amended as a republic in 1964 with seven further amendments.

Political Parties (in alphabetical order)

Chama Cha Uma Party (CCM), Democratic Assistant Party, Democratic Party of Kenya (DP), Economic Independent Party, Federal Party of Kenya, Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Asili (Ford Asili or Ford-A), Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (Ford-K), Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-People (Ford-People), Green African Party, Kenya African National Union (KANU)(governing party), Kenya National Congress, Kenya National Democratic Alliance, Kenya Peoples Democratic Party, Kenya Republican Reformation Party, Kenya Social Congress, Kenya Socialist Party, Labour Party Democracy, Labour Party

of Kenya, Liberal Democratic Party, Liberal Greens Party of Kenya, National Conservative Party of Kenya, National Democratic Independent Union, National Development Party (NDP), National Labour Party, New Peoples Democratic Party, Party of Independent Candidates of Kenya, Peoples Democratic Union of Kenya, Peoples Party of Kenya, Reform of Political and Kenya Union, Reform Party of Kenya, SAFINA, Shirikisho Party Of Kenya, Social Democratic Party or SDP, Social Party for Advancement and Reforms – Kenya, The Peoples Solidarity Union of Kenya SOC/36694, The Union Party, United Democratic of Peace Integrity in Kenya, United Kenya Citizen Party, United Patriotic Party of Kenya, UMMA – Patriotic Party Of Kenya.

FootNotes: (1) per 1,000 live births; (2) per 100,000 live births.

Source: The State of the World's Children 2001, UNICEF.

Picture above: The parish church tower after the fire



FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE KENYAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

BUNGOMA DIOCESE - The Bishop is the Rt. Rev. Norman K. Wambua. Of the 39 priests in the diocese, 32 are diocesan and 7 are religious. [1]

ELDORET DIOCESE - Since 1990 the Bishop has been the Rt. Rev. Cornelius Kipng'ego Arap Korir. There are 89 priests in the diocese, 55 diocesan and 34 religious. [1]

EMBU DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. John Njue has been the Bishop since 1986. There are 26 diocesan priests and 11 religious priests in the diocese. [2]

GARISSA DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Paul Darmanin has been the Bishop since 1984. There is 1 diocesan priest and 20 religious priests in the diocese. [3]

HOMA BAY DIOCESE - Since 1993 the Rt. Rev. Linus Okok Okwach has been the Bishop. Of the 38 priests in the diocese 22 are diocesan and 16 are religious. [1]

ISIOLO APOSTOLIC VICARIATE - The diocese is a Vicariate Apostolic which was created in 1996. Since the foundation the vicar apostolic has been the Rt. Rev. Luigi Locati. There are 24 priests working in the diocese: 4 diocesan, 8 fidei donum and 12 religious priests. The vicariate has 115 catechists.

KAKAMEGA DIOCESE - Since 1978 the Rt. Rev. Philip Sulumeti has been the Bishop. Of the 54 priests in the diocese 32 are diocesan and 22 are religious. [1]

KERICHO DIOCESE - Since 1996 the Rt. Rev. Philip Anyolo has been the Bishop. There are 20 priests working in the diocese: 10 diocesan, 1 fidei donum and 9 religious priests. The diocese has 275 catechists. [4]

KISII DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Joseph Mairura Okemwa has been the Bishop since 1995. There are 14 diocesan priests and 4 religious priests in the diocese. [1]

KISUMU ARCHDIOCESE - The archdiocese is a metropolitan see and since 1990 the M. Rev. Rev. Zacchaeus Okoth has been the Archbishop. There are 54 priests working in the archdiocese: 37 diocesan, 1 fidei donum, and 16 religious priests, and there are 700 catechists.

KITALE DIOCESE - The diocese has 17 parishes and since 1998 the Rt. Rev. Maurice Anthony Crowley has been the Bishop. Of the 33 priests in the diocese 16 are diocesan and 17 are missionaries. [1]

KITUI DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Boniface Lele has been the Bishop since 1996. There are 39 priests working in the diocese: 28 diocesan, 3 fidei donum and 8 religious priests. There are 21 parishes and 88 catechists. [4]

LODWAR DIOCESE - Since 1978 the Rt. Rev. John Christopher Mahon has been the Bishop. There are 11 diocesan priests, 19 religious priests, and 130 catechists. [1]

MACHAKOS DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Urbanus Joseph Kioko has been the Bishop since 1973. There are 40 parishes with 76 diocesan priests and 24 religious priests. [4]

MARSABIT DIOCESE - Since 1981 the Rt. Rev. Ambrose Ravasi, IMC, has been the Bishop. There are 44 priests in the diocese: 10 diocesan, 7 fidei donum and 27 religious priests. The diocese has 130 catechists. [2]

MERU DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Silas Sylvius Njiru has been the Bishop since 1976. There are 32 parishes 32 served by 104 priests: 57 diocesan priests, and 47 religious. [2]

MILITARY ORDINARIATE - The military Ordinary is the Rt. Rev. Alfred Arap Rotich. There are 15 chaplains, 24 catechists, and 23 churches.

MOMBASA ARCHDIOCESE - The archdiocese is a metropolitan see and since 1990 the M. Rev. John Njenga has been the Archbishop. There

are 78 priests - 52 diocesan and 26 religious - working with 145 catechists in 38 parishes.

MURANG'A DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Peter Kihara is the Bishop and there are 57 priests in the diocese: 41 diocesan priests and 16 religious. [2]

NAIROBI ARCHDIOCESE - The archdiocese is a metropolitan see and the M. Rev. Raphael S. Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki has been the Bishop since 1969, and the Archbishop since 1997. There are 542 priests in the

archdiocese: 99 diocesan priests and 443 religious. Many religious congregations and societies, including local and missionary, have houses and colleges in the archdiocese. The White Fathers, numbering 14, are involved in various activities, including running 2 parishes.

NAKURU DIOCESE - Since 1997 the Rt. Rev. Peter J. Kairo has been the Bishop. There are 33 parishes and 90 priests: 55 diocesan priests, 2 fidei donum, and 33 religious priests. [4]

NGONG DIOCESE - The Rt. Rev. Colin Cameron Davies has been the Bishop since 1977. 20 diocesan priests, 4 fidei donum, and 30 reli-

FootNotes: [1] = a suffragan diocese of Kisumu Archdiocese; [2] = a suffragan of Nyeri Archdiocese; [3] = a suffragan of Mombasa Archdiocese; [4] = a suffragan of Nairobi Archdiocese. The first Catholic Missionaries, the Holy Ghost Fathers, arrived in Kenya in 1889. The hierarchy was established in 1953 and the three Metropolitan sees in 1990. In recent years the Catholic Church has been very active in speaking out against injustice in Kenya. The Bishops have written many pastoral letters which have advised and guided the faithful through the troubled times.

Sources: Various AMECEA Documentation Service documents, and 'International Fides Service' (No 4150-NE 299), 28th. May, 1999.

The Dioceses of Kenya



gious priests work in the diocese along with 495 catechists. [4]

NYERI ARCHDIOCESE - The archdiocese is a metropolitan see and since 1990 the M. Rev. Nicodemus Kirima has been the Archbishop. There are 116 priests in the archdiocese - 88 diocesan priests, 16 fidei donum, and 12 religious - working with 1,100 catechists.

The Burning of South 'B'

By Fr. George Smith W.F.

On the 30th of November at midday you could see the plumes of black smoke billowing over the South 'B' shopping centre 400 yards from our church. Word spread quickly: they have set fire to some of the hawkers' kiosks on the edge of Fuata Nyayo slums. The 'they' were the 'Muslims' who had gone to pray in the mosque nearby; fired up with righteous anger in this their Holy Month of Ramadhan they had decided to do something about the kiosks which had been constructed illegally on land belonging to the mosque. They began to eject the squatters.

With their little makeshift shops on fire, the traders retaliated ... not only did they fight back with their fists but more crucially they set fire to the mosque. This incensed the 'Muslims' who straightaway set fire to the Makuti Night Club on the other side of the mosque at the edge of the shopping centre; then they fought their way into the slum area and torched a number of houses. Later it was discovered that in one house someone inside was burned to death.

Pitched battles began to be fought everywhere and the riot police were called in. The turmoil raged far into the night. We at Our Lady Queen of Peace had a grandstand view of proceedings as we are situated at the intersection of the two roads leading to the shops and the mosque. We could see and hear the clashes between rioters and police and the whiff of teargas was everywhere.

But there was a sense of unreality about it all; it was exciting but not fearful. It was like being in the middle of a huge Hollywood movie set, enjoying the proceedings but in no way feeling endangered. Riot police charged up and down the street alongside our house beating their batons on their shields and shouting "ua, ua" (kill, kill) as they chased after the rioters.

People were injured, many arrests were made. Police chiefs entered our compound and assured us that everything was under control. Although we had this assurance our plan of going out for a meal that night to celebrate Fr. Franz Gieringer's birthday was put on hold. An uneasy calm settled over South 'B' with police patrols everywhere.

The next day, Friday, meetings took place at a high level between police and top religious leaders in central Nairobi. We were informed that tension had been defused and matters now were under control, although rumours circulated all round South 'B' that the 'Muslims' were going to avenge the loss of their mosque by targeting Christian places of worship. Just after midday, I was alarmed by the huge crowds of 'Muslims' swirling past our gates on their way to the burnt-out mosque ... they were chanting "Allah, akbar" as they marched along.

We had been told earlier that gatherings at the South 'B' mosque had been banned in the morning by the police! Nonetheless thousands of 'Muslims' from all over Nairobi went there. Less than two hours later the same chants could be heard and we knew they were on their way back from the mosque. Even then we did not feel in too great danger; our gates were locked and no one was in the church compound.

Just after 2pm I joined Fr. Franz on the rooftop of our parish centre 30 yards from our house: it was an excellent vantage point where we could see all the way down to the mosque area. Shops were being attacked at the shopping centre; we could see looting going on. As the crowds made their way up the two streets which run parallel to our compound, we could see rocks being thrown and we could hear the continuous noise of windows being smashed all the way up the roads leading to our church. We still felt that

other than broken windows, there was nothing to fear: as long as we kept a low profile, all would be well. From the rooftop we scanned the streets below and then it began to dawn on us ... there were no sign of any police present!

Then rocks began to rain on our rooftop position. Windows in our hall were being smashed. The far side of our house was also being bombarded. We looked over the parapet into our compound: to our horror our puny defences had been breached ... dozens of 'Muslim' youths had broken into our compound and were smashing the windows of our church and our parish centre. Our lives were suddenly in grave danger. This was no longer a Hollywood movie set.

What should we do? There was smoke coming from downstairs: they had set fire to the parish centre ... we were trapped. We dashed downstairs; Fr. Franz went to the classroom to put out the flames. I tried to get out the only exit door: I was confronted by a gang of youngish men mostly Somali types, many wearing the

white kanzu. They were intent on systematically smashing every window on their side of the church. For a fleeting moment I pleaded with them to stop the violence. They were totally enraged at seeing me and engulfed me in a torrent of rocks and stones. I disappeared back into the parish centre as this barrage of stones struck the door. I bolted the door as the mob tried to knock it down.

There seemed only one thing to do now ... get back up the stairs to the rooftop from where perhaps we could climb down one of the drain pipes to safety. Just then Fr. Franz called out that the church was going up in flames. This had the effect of momentarily distracting our assailants ... and then they started running away. They had apparently heard the sirens of the riot squad. The police had at long last arrived on the scene like the cavalry in a cowboy and Indian film. Our emotions were a mixture of relief and anger ... they were in time to save us but not in time to save our once lovely church of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

Sr. Severina, and Bros. Paul Kulwa (left) and Francis Luhende (right), of the Apostles of Jesus, standing in front of the parish church as it was. The parish hall is on the left in the background.

Editor's Note: Fr. George Smith W.F. is the Parish Priest of Our Lady Queen of Peace. The parenthesis around the word Muslims in this article, ie. 'Muslim', have been added by the Editor

