

Crisis in Ivory Coast Deepens

The Ivory Coast's political deadlock is degenerating quickly into civil war. Essentially, November's election results are being ignored by the incumbent, Laurent Gbagbo, who refuses to step aside. The internationally-recognized president, Alassane Ouattara, has yet to take office in spite of the appointment of a parallel government.

Meanwhile, beginning last weekend, supporters of both began engaging each other. Gbagbo commands the loyalty of the army and much of the south while Ouattara has the support of the north.

Curt Cole, HCJB global vice president of International Ministries, says one of their partners, Fréquence Vie (Life Frequency), was caught in the crossfire in Abobo, a northern suburb of the capital of Abidjan: "They are still on the air, but they actually had one of their repeaters knocked off the air during a demonstration and destroyed." Repairs are estimated at \$20,000.

It didn't end there. Cole says, "We also have another partner station in the north that, as far as we know, is still on the air but has suffered tremendously mainly because of the power cuts. They've had to go off the air."

HCJB Global Voice has partnered with Fréquence Vie since 1999 when it began broadcasting a message of hope in four languages: French, Baoule, Bambara and Dioula.

Tim Welch, Côte d'Ivoire director for SIM which operates radio station Fréquence Vie, adds his concern for staff members over the tensions. "[Recent] reports from our missionaries are that some checkpoints in town are getting more difficult to get through," he said.

The crisis in Ivory Coast is creating another "forgotten

emergency.” Cole explains: “There are between 30,000-40,000 that have gone across the border as refugees into Liberia. That’s something that Liberia is ill-equipped to handle as well, so we have an emerging refugee situation there.”

Although Liberia has welcomed the refugees and is trying to meet the immediate emergency, Cole says they will need help. HCJB Global is readying their response: “ABC University, in the northern part of Liberia, is looking at a program to begin to assist in some of these refugee camps. We’re looking at the possibility there of engaging with medical teams. Pray for peace. Cole notes that “many Liberians, during their civil war, were in Ivory Coast as refugees. So now they have the opportunity to really minister to the Ivoirians that are in their country as refugees. Pray for that.”

Response will be more than food and shelter. Cole says their teams will need to be ready to plant the seeds of the Gospel: “There will be openness because they’re displaced, they’re out of their element, and their hearts are usually more tender.”