

Bible Translator Shot Dead in Central African Republic

A Bible translator in the war-ravaged Central African Republic (CAR) was shot and killed as he attempted to escape mounting violence in the capital city of Bangui, according to Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Elisée Zama, a translator with ACATBA, Wycliffe's partner organization in CAR, died in the killings that took place in the northern part of the capital city, Bangui, Dec. 5.

"I know that without your prayers, we could not continue to stand here," says ACATBA's director. "Pray especially for the family of one of our translators, Elisée Zama, who was translating the Bible into the Mandja language and was in the process of taking training at the Evangelical Theology Seminary of Bangui to earn a degree in translation. He leaves a widow and children."

Violence began escalating in the CAR following a coup this past March. Government health clinics have been largely abandoned by workers, and many humanitarian organizations have withdrawn from the country or cut back services, according to .

The regional director of Wycliffe's main partner organization, SIL, reported Monday that the situation in Bangui is still very tense.

"Reprisals against Christians in particular in Bangui are of great concern," Larry Robbins says. "There have been ... reprisals in certain neighborhoods of Bangui, resulting in thousands seeking refuge on the airstrip of the international airport.

"Our SIL colleagues report a quieter night. They remain within

the security of the School of Theology compound until further notice. There are French patrols now in evidence. We are grateful for the unanimous passing of a U.N. resolution, which gives the French troops a mandate to take appropriate force to protect the civilian population, and it appears that this has had an immediate effect."

Robbins also requests prayer for Zama's widow and three young children and for ACATBA leaders as they prepare for his burial under very difficult circumstances.

"We will continue to pray for safety and an end to the violence which has shaken so many communities in Africa these past several months," says Don Shenk, director of The Tide, a ministry that produces radio programs worldwide. "We have heard many stories and know some that have been persecuted for their faith. ... We pray the violence will stop and that people will embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior."