

Revolution in Egypt Takes Ugly Turn

Although the protests started out peaceful enough, violence erupted Wednesday between government and anti-government supporters.

The violence quickly spread around the city in the form of looting and arson. There were reports of gangs of thugs supporting President Hosni Mubarak. These bands attacked reporters, foreigners, and rights workers while the army rounded up foreign journalists.

The spreading lawlessness comes at a time when Global Advance is preparing for two strategic events in the Middle East in 2011. President Jonathan Shibley was in Egypt last week when the protests started.

While the spiral into chaos is unsettling, he says, "I think this is a watershed moment not only for Egypt, but for much of the Arab world. We're going to have to take a little bit of a 'wait and see' approach to what continues to play out. I also believe that it's a ripe time for the Gospel."

Global Advance has plans to conduct a training event for pastoral leaders from many different nations in the region. The event wasn't scheduled for February, but delays in planning could mean delays further down the line. Delays are an inevitable part of a country in the throes of a revolution.

"Within the past week, I think everybody's plans have been put on ice, and everyone has got to wait and see what's going to happen," says Shibley. "People, right now, are just primarily concerned for the basics and their own safety."

No matter what happens with the government, the vision has been cast, and the Great Commission won't change. Shibley

says, "I was so encouraged with what God is doing among some of the Egyptian nationals and their mission strategy, not only for reaching Egypt but also parts of the Arab-speaking world. It was fascinating and really gave me a sense of true, indigenous missions."

The team hopes to launch a Marketplace Missions event for business leaders in the area. These business leaders face difficult opposition just because of their faith.

It's interesting to note how the physical aspect of the uprising has provided an opportunity. "Some of the things that are happening parallel what's going on in the Spirit, as well. There's restlessness in that entire part of the world. I think, as believers, we need to focus our prayers on the people in the Middle East."

Prayer is needed. Shibley says, "God has His men and women strategically positioned already on the ground. They're in countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia. They're very few, but they're still there. We need to pray that God gives them a holy strength and a holy boldness to continue living out their faith, reaching others in a relevant, practical way."