



*We are encouraged  
by publishers  
who proclaim  
hope despite  
difficulties, dangers,  
and war.*

*by Isaac Phiri*

# Proclaim Peace Amidst War

**H**ere in the international division of Cook Communications Ministries, we pay very close attention to events around the world that impact publishers.

Particularly troubling is the news about violent developments. Factional fighting in Cote d'Ivoire. Religious clashes in India. The perennial Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. Public uprisings in Venezuela. Political clashes in Bolivia. Rampant crime in South Africa. Terrorist attacks in the Philippines. The list goes on.

At times we are extremely concerned for our partners serving in those areas. The strength and courage of publishers serving in violent parts of the world cannot be overstated. In this issue of *InterLit* we feature a few such courageous organizations.

In Colombia, Mennonite publisher Henry Góngora expresses CLARA's strong commitment to publishing books about peace and reconciliation despite the ongoing political violence that has killed many.

About ten years ago, we came across a publisher in Burundi. Then, we lost contact for a few years as that country went into civil war. A few months ago, however, we were pleasantly surprised to find that CEPRODILIC continues to publish despite the circumstances. Read the story on page 8.

From Pakistan, Boaz Gill of Shaffaf Communications tells of threats received. "Stop your Christian publishing," he is warned. "Pakistan is a Muslim country."

From Israel, Raed Masih says Palestinian Christian authors struggle with many questions. "How can one discuss love for one's enemies ... or Bible verses that relate to Israel?" he asks.

There are no quick answers for those publishing in difficult situations, but the Bible provides some insights. First of all, most of the Bible is set in volatile circumstances. Old Testament stories are about war. They depict violence in different ways. Most Old Testament heroes—Abraham,

Moses, David, Joshua and others—were fighting men.

The New Testament is not any more friendly. Very early in the life of Jesus, we see a brutal ruler killing innocent children. Jesus' family fled, as refugees, to Egypt. Later the Roman occupying force, with the approval of the locals, kills Jesus brutally and in public.

The rest of the New Testament is also full of such stories—beating, killings, escapes.

Both Old and New Testament records are, in a sense, a print version of today's CNN non-stop coverage of humans doing evil. These records were published in violent times.

There are two key lessons we can learn from the authors and publishers of God's Word.

First, they told the human story as it is. They did not try to "Christianize" what was going on. Neither did they come up with easy answers for the difficulties of human history. They confessed to not understanding everything. The authors of the Psalms, for instance, often cried out to God about the evil and injustices they witnessed.

The second enduring lesson we can learn from the authors of Scripture is that they acknowledged God as sovereign over human history. Despite the difficulties of their environment, and the violence they described, they always communicated a message of hope through their writing.

The publishers featured in this issue of *InterLit* are a great encouragement for us. While their books address human realities, they also bring a message of hope. They proclaim peace amidst wars and rumors of war. ❖