THE INTERNET AND THE WORLD

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This picture is an amazing representation of the spread of Facebook around the world. If you are interested in how it was produced, you can read about it here. It is fascinating to look at the places where there is very little Facebook activity; I realise very few people live in central Australia, but why so little coverage in most of Russia? On the other hand, it is predictable that much of Africa has so little coverage. However, it is possible, without much strain to pick out the large cities such as Nairobi and Lagos.

Over the last few weeks, it has been brought home to me just how much the Internet has changed things, even in Africa. Over the last few days I have been following the evolving situation in Ivory Coast through Twitter. Those people who are tweeting about the subject are marking their tweets with the tag #civ2010 which makes it easy to find what people are saying.

There is a lot of political invective from both sides of the situation, which is informative in its own way. But most value comes from eyewitness accounts of what is going on; along with the links to the international press coverage of the situation. It also seems that the deepening political crisis in Ivory Coast has not blunted the national sense of humour, because some of the tweets are absolutely hilarious.

There is also a very good Facebook page where people can report on the situation and post their photographs.

Even a couple of years ago, I would have had to wait a day or two for the BBC Website to pick up on the situation, today I have instant access to more information than I can actually handle. It is truly remarkable.

Please do take a moment to pray for the situation in the country. It seems intractable at the moment, with neither side willing to back down. Our friends in Abidjan are all safe, but it isn't clear what is happening in the Kouya area, which was on the front line between the two forces last time violence broke out. Lord have Mercy.