HE ISN'T A TAME LION

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Category: Observations

Let's face it, most readers of Kouyanet live in very strange societies. We might think that our peaceful, democracies are normal, but for most of human history (and on most of the globe, today) people have lived in very different situations.

Over the past week or so, the British press have been tying themselves in knots over David Cameron's tax affairs. Whatever Cameron has or has not done, he's just an amateur compared to Uganda's MPs who have recently voted to exempt themselves from incomeÂ tax.

It is the norm for governments to be corrupt and self-serving. Not only that, but it is also the norm for violence to be used to oppress people. From the petty, casual corruption and beatings handed out by the police at roadside checkpoints to state-sponsored suppression of minorities; prejudice and violence are a part of everyday life for so many people.

We are rightly appalled at the pitiful state of the refugees flooding into Southern Europe, but the truth is that they represent only a small percentage of the world-wide refugee problem.

Often, when I say things like this, people will tell me that our government is just as bad as any in the world; to which I politely say; "rubbish". Of course there is corruption in British politics, but it is not on the epic scale that you find in many other places in the world. Above everything else,Â our politicians don't stickÂ the opposition leader in prison at election times and bring the tanks on to the streets if they lose.

The simple truth is that violence and oppression have been the norm for most people, in most places, for most of history, but we, in our part of the world, are sheltered from it. This may not always be so, but it is at the moment.

The reason behind this skim over the world situation is that I think the way in which we live shapes the way in which we read and understand the Scriptures; especially the Old Testament.

In the UK, where (with some exceptions) people have enough to eat and live at peace with their neighbours and the wider world, the stories of divine retribution come across as strange or even barbaric. Violence is not a part of our lives and we have no mental framework through which to process it.

Now, imagine you are a street kid in Rio; hustling to make a living, facing violence and persecution on a daily basis. Or think about a woman trying to bring up a family in Southern Sudan as wave upon wave of fighters pass through the area in the apparently never-ending war that the country has faced.

To these people, the Old Testament describes the world as they know it. The violence and bloodshed are not strange; it's their reality - just as it has been a reality for most of humanity. Despite this, there is something different about the Old Testament and that is the promise that eventually the

good guys win. This is a message that the street kids, the victims of war and human trafficking need to hear. They need to know that in a world of violence, pain and humiliation, there is someone who will make things right.

The pastel-tinted, self-affirming spirituality of Facebook Christianity is of no comfort to those who suffer violence and threat. They need a faith which understands the reality they live in, which faces up to violence and corruption and which promises that the wicked will, one day, be overthrown. The Bible is based in real life and reflects the experience of the poor and needy of the world.

The amazing thing is that the final answer to violence is found in a corrupt court, where an innocent man was sentenced to death by a vacillating official representing a brutal empire.