

SHALOM-SCCRR'S INTERNATIONAL CHAIRMAN INTERVENED TO SAVE THE LIVES OF LAZARUS EPAE AND PAUL AGIS IN THE ILEMI TRIANGLE REGION.

Lazarus and Paul narrated their story to Godfrey Okoth and Paulson Erot on 18th July 2019.

In the early years when Rev. Dr. Patrick Devine (Shalom-SCCRR's International Chairman) was establishing Shalom-SCCRR, he had travelled to the Ilemi Triangle, specifically along the Kenya–Ethiopia borderline, to collect empirical data on the “*Turkana - Dassenach Conflict: Causes and Consequence.*” He was accompanied by three research assistants - Lazarus Epae (Turkana), Paul Agis (Turkana) and Ephraim (Dassanech). Fr. Patrick and his team arrived in a Dassanech village called Salany situated on the Kenya - Ethiopian borderline. Upon arrival, they learned of a reprisal attack by the Turkana warriors upon Salany (Ethiopia) following a previous attack by the Dassenach warriors against the Turkana village of Kokuro (Kenya) a few days before Christmas. They found the community members in disarray, confusion and mourning following the killing, injury, maiming, loss of herds of livestock and massive destruction done as a result of the attack.

When the members of Salany village (including the armed warriors and the women who had lost their husbands, sons and relatives) saw the two Turkanas accompanying Fr. Patrick, they were so furious and they wanted to kill the two Turkana men for revenge immediately. To avoid them being killed, Fr. Patrick got them into a mud house and stood blocking the doorway refusing to let the massacre be executed by the angry villagers (One could understand their fury because of the situation at hand). The ‘detention’ and standoff took hours of scary negotiation and mediation and all this time Fr. Patrick was blocking the door preventing the enraged villagers from killing his Turkana companions. According to Lazarus Epae (currently promoted to Assistant Chief, Nachukui Sub-Location in Turkana County - 77,000 km²), “Fr. Patrick literally blocked the door and defended us with his body and told the angry warriors that they would have to kill him before killing us.” His colleague Paul Agis (currently a catechist, Todonyang’ Catholic Parish) reiterated that “If it wasn’t for Fr. Patrick, the two of us would have been killed in that fateful day... We thank God for using him to intervene on our behalf.”

After hours of Fr. Patrick’s intervention and pleading with the villagers to spare his friends’ lives, one woman who was the owner of the house where they were held under threat of death joined him in begging for reason to prevail and mercy to be shown by her people. Eventually, enough calm was restored to get the two ‘hostages’ out of the house into Fr. Patrick’s car and he drove them back to safety in the heart of their own tribal lands. Fr. Patrick then returned to Salany village and with the help of other local people attended to the wounded and transported some for medical attention in Omorate center, the first nearby town in Ethiopia.

Over the years since the above incident, Shalom-SCCRR has continued to intervene along the Kenya – Ethiopia borderline through empowering communities with analytical skills and techniques of peacebuilding and conflict transformation; development and strengthening of local-based conflict management and resolution structures; and, implementation of inter-ethnic educational-development projects. It is worthwhile to note that over the the past ten years of Shalom-SCCRR’s existence, the organization has made significant contribution in conflict transformation, peacebuilding, inter-ethnic educational development, and prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in the Eastern Africa region.

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Signature:

Godfrey Okoth 31/07/2019

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