

London vigil walkers call for peace as violence spreads

by [Jo Siedlecka](#)

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London, August 9 (ENInews)--With the smell of smoke and wail of sirens in the background, about 200 to 300 people from a range of faiths on the evening of 8 August gathered for a prayer and a walk to the center of Tottenham, north London, scarred by a weekend of rioting.

Called a "Vigil of Hope," the walk took place in an atmosphere of escalating violence in London and other cities in Britain. A 26-year-old man was reported killed in Croydon, south of London and hundreds have been arrested as business and shops were burned and looted in a third day of violence. Prime Minister David Cameron recalled Parliament and vowed to put an additional 10,000 police officers on the streets to quell outbreaks in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham and Bristol.

In Tottenham, where the unrest began on Saturday after a peaceful protest against the killing of 29-year-old Mark Duggan last week by police, the Rev. Valentin Dedji of St. Mark's Methodist Church said it was difficult to get to the site of the vigil. "Most of the roads around here were blocked, but people managed to get here. I came on my bicycle. We prayed first of all in Holy Trinity Anglican Church for two hours. Then we walked together to the High Road. The family of Mark Duggan didn't come. They were too afraid. We prayed for them," he said in a phone interview.

Dedji said attendees included the Anglican Bishop of Edmonton (Diocese of London), Peter Wheatley; Sister Eugenia from St. Ignatius Roman Catholic Church; members of the United Reformed Church and Pentecostalist and Independent churches; David Lammy, the Member of Parliament for Tottenham, and the leader of Haringey (the local district) Council.

According to Alvin Carpio, a community organizer from St. Ignatius, "we wanted to show the world that the majority of people here want peace and are not involved in this violence. We ended the day feeling more hopeful, although everybody is scared about what is going to happen next."

Carpio noted that the government has cut 75 per cent of youth clubs in Tottenham as well as other social services, and many have pointed to current economic austerity moves as a possible cause of the unrest. "This is an area of high unemployment where young people have little to hope for," Carpio said in a phone interview.

The churches in the area run youth projects and counseling services. Since the riots began they have been the first to offer food, shelter and other support to people who have lost their homes, Carpio said.

Sister Eugenia, co-chair of a group called Haringey Citizens, said in a statement that the organization includes Christian churches, schools and Jewish groups and that "community leaders across Haringey are united in calling for peace and justice."

"In the last three months we conducted a listening campaign to identify issues of common concern. Local people want to tackle street safety, build community relationships and address the lack of job opportunities in the borough," she said.