

May 1, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

An escalation in protests and isolated violence in areas of Bangkok, Thailand and in drug violence in the border towns of Mexico has raised many concerns regarding the safety of those participating in the Global Urban Trek. Family members and friends of students who are planning short term mission events in Thailand and Mexico are asking, "is it safe to continue conducting short term ministry activities under such conditions?"

Those of us who oversee the short term mission activity of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship have prayerfully considered our activities in areas where violence has been a concern. As the majority of our summer activities in Bangkok and Mexico City are not being affected by the areas of concern, we have decided to proceed with our planned activities.

The violence in Bangkok has been limited to government targets and is not affecting partnering ministry sites. Residents and tourists are in danger only to the extent that they are involved with protest activities. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and our partnering ministry sites are not connected to protesting agencies in Bangkok.

The violence in the border towns of Mexico has been specifically directed toward those involved in drug trafficking. Furthermore, Mexico is a large country where vast populations remain relatively untouched by this rise in drug violence along the border. Violence has not been directed toward US citizens. Mexico City, where students will be spending their summer, is over 900 miles from the borders affected by drug violence. Several of us from InterVarsity just returned from Bangkok and Mexico City where life continues as normal.

Our ministry partners are aware of and concerned about the disruption these protests cause and the rise in violence. InterVarsity has, in the past, redirected teams we feel may be in danger. Based on the input of those living in the areas where our students will be living and working we have decided to proceed. Students who do not wish to continue on their mission trip to Bangkok or Mexico City will be allowed to bow out so long as any direct costs (such as airline cancelations penalties) are covered.

We thank God for supportive friends and family connected to the students who are traveling this summer with InterVarsity. Your concern is a reflection of your love. We also recognize that many of the students and staff going on the Global Urban Trek are foregoing other valuable summer activities such as employment or classes. Thank you for your willingness to encourage and pray for those students and teams who decided to move forward engaging in valuable ministry activity this summer.

God is good.

Scott Bessenecker, Associate Director
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