



The Joan B. Kroc
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE

Peace & Justice Update
December 2, 2005
(Volume 13, Number 8)

The countries for the Peace & Justice Updates have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute. The International Human Rights section is intended to focus on aspects of international law. For information on specific cases of human rights abuses, please visit www.hrw.org or www.amnesty.org. The Gender and Peace section highlights events in peace-building that pertain to gender and human rights.

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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

ADNKI	=	ADNKI (www.adnki.com)
AfricaFocus	=	AfricaFocus (www.africafocus.org)
AFP	=	Agence France-Presse (www.afp.com)
AI	=	Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org)
AllAfrica	=	AllAfrica Global Media (www.allafrica.com)
Angola Press	=	Angola Press (www.angolapress-angop.ao)
Asian Tribune	=	Asian Tribune (www.asiantribune.com)
AP	=	Associated Press (www.ap.org)
AWID	=	Association for Women's Rights in Development (www.awid.org)
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk/)
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports (www.monitor.bbc.co.uk)
Cambodia Daily	=	The Cambodia Daily (www.cambodiadaily.com)
CBC News	=	CBC News (www.cbc.ca)
CIA	=	CIA - The World Factbook (www.cia.gov)
CISA	=	Catholic Information Service for Africa (www.allafrica.com)
Colombo Page	=	Sri Lankan Online News (www.colombopage.com)
Daily News	=	Sri Lanka Daily News (www.dailynews.lk)
EU	=	European Union (www.europa.eu.int)
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network (www.guardian.co.uk)
HRW	=	Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org)
ICC	=	International Criminal Court (www.icc-cpi.int)
ICG	=	International Crisis Group (www.crisisweb.org)
ICTR	=	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (www.ict.rw)
Inq7	=	Inq7 (http://news.inq7.net)
IndiaTimes	=	India Times (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)
Independent	=	The Independent (www.independent.co.uk)
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
JEN	=	Japan Economic Newswire (www.library.dialog.com)
Khaleej Times	=	Khaleej Times (www.khaleejtimes.com)
Kathmandu Post	=	The Kathmandu Post (www.nepalnews.com.np)
Khmer Intelligence	=	Khmer Intelligence (www.khmerintelligence.org)
Jurist	=	The Jurist (http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/)
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com)
Lanka Web	=	Lanka Web (www.lankaweb.com)
M&G	=	Mail and Guardian (www.mg.co.za)
Monitor	=	The Monitor (www.monitor.co.ug)
MONUC	=	MONUC (www.monuc.org)
Nepal News	=	Nepal News (www.nepalnews.com)
Nepali Times	=	Nepali Times (www.nepalitimes.com)
New Times	=	The New Times (www.newtimes.co.rw)
New Vision	=	New Vision (www.newvision.co.ug)
News24	=	News24 (www.news24.com)
News Blaze	=	News Blaze (www.newsblaze.com)
NYT	=	The New York Times (www.nytimes.com)
NZ Herald	=	The New Zealand Herald (www.nzherald.co.nz)
PANA	=	Panafrican News Agency (www.panapress.com)
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam Great Britain (www.oxfam.org.uk)
Pacific Magazine	=	Pacific Magazine (www.pacificislands.cc)
Reuters	=	Reuters (www.reuters.com)

RSF	=	Reporters sans frontières (www.rsf.org)
SEAPA	=	Southeast Asian Press Alliance (www.seapabkk.org)
SMH	=	Sydney Morning Herald (www.smh.com)
ST	=	Sudan Tribune (www.sudantribune.com)
Tamil Canadian	=	Tamil Canadian (www.tamilcanadian.com)
Turkish Press	=	Turkish Press (www.turkishpress.com)
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage (www.un.org)
UNESCO	=	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (www.unesco.org)
UNHCHR	=	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.unhcr.ch)
UNICEF	=	UN Children's Fund (www.unicef.org)
UNIFEM	=	UN Development Fund for Women (www.unifem.org)
VOA	=	Voice of America (www.voanews.com)
Xinhua	=	Xinhua News Agency (www.xinhuanet.com/english)
WP	=	Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com)
Web India	=	Web India (www.webindia123.com)

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BURUNDI

Attempts at peace talks with rebels fail as violence begins again: Just a week after the government seemed poised to deliver on its pledge to bring the National Liberation Forces (FNL) to the negotiating table, mortar shells fired at the capital signaled renewed fighting. The FNL, Burundi's last remaining rebel group, launched the attack in retaliation for recent raids by the army, killing at least 41 rebels and leading to the capture of 80 others. On November 17, a rebel spokesman had said that they would agree to peace negotiations if FNL prisoners were set free. But two military strikes since that time prompted the latest attacks. "We think the FNL wanted to show that they are still present, that they are still strong even though they are under attack," military spokesman Adolphe Manirakiza said November 25. Analysts from the United Nations say that long-standing peace in Burundi, a country just emerging from a 12-year civil war can only be achieved if the FNL is disarmed and given a place in the newly inaugurated government. (M&G, November 25; Reuters, November 17, 24, 2005)

UN Secretary-General asks for extension of mandate despite government's protests: The Burundian government has expressed its unhappiness with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's latest recommendation to extend the UN mission to Burundi's (ONUB) mandate. On November 18, the government had announced that UN peacekeepers would begin leaving in early January, a claim initially bolstered by Annan's recommendations to downsize ONUB starting in December 2005. Annan had cited the smooth transition to a newly elected government and strong efforts to bring the rebel National Liberation Forces (FNL) to negotiations as reasons for withdrawal. Burundians had also reportedly been seeking a removal of UN peacekeepers after several UN peacekeeper uniforms had turned up in rebel camps November 20, prompting allegations of conspiracy. But following recent skirmishes between the army and FNL, Annan addressed the UN Security Council November 23, saying that renewed conflict could be the penalty for a hasty transition. "I encourage the Government, as well as the international and regional partners concerned, to adopt a common approach to resolving this conflict," he said. Following free and fair elections, promises of free education, and economic upturns, Burundi is being called a success story as it emerges from a 12-year civil war in which 300,000 people were killed. (Angola News, November 20; Reuters, November 18, 20, 23; UN News, November 24, 2005)

CAMBODIA

King officially appoints top administrators for Khmer Rouge Tribunal: On November 24 the government stated that King Sihamoni had officially appointed two top administrators for the future Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Sean Visoth, who has held a number of senior government posts, was appointed director of the Extraordinary Chamber's office of administration, while Michel Lee, a UN employee, was appointed to the position of deputy director. Though the Cambodian government reportedly stands \$10.8 million short of its \$56.3 million budget for the three-year trial, the king's official appointments along with the recent UN selection of judges and co-prosecutors would seem to bring the country one step closer to justice. Sean Visoth himself was pleased with the progress both the government and the UN were making and said, "Cambodia is now in the process of attaining judicial reform and once the trial meets international standards, it will clearly (show) the government's strong commitment." The Khmer Rouge tribunal is to bring leaders of the 1975-1979 genocide to justice after thirty years of impunity. (JEN, November 24, 2005)

Over 4,000 surplus weapons destroyed at peace ceremony: At the 44th Flame of Peace ceremony, held November 24 in Kampong Speu province, government authorities destroyed over 4,000 surplus military weapons. Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng used the event as an opportunity to encourage police crackdown on illegal arms use in the country and stated, “Although we have achieved success in destroying surplus weapons and the progress is affirmed by the international community, we know that the weapons still pose a threat to our people and hinder our nation’s development.” With the assistance of the EU, almost 200,000 weapons have been destroyed since May 1999, in the government’s attempt to reduce arms-related violence and deaths. The surplus is a result of over thirty years of upheaval, including civil war and the genocide of 1975-1979. (Xinhua, November 24, 2005)

Cambodia ranks highly in the clearing of landmines: According to the recent Landmine Monitor Report, compiled annually by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Cambodia ranked as the second most productive country in clearing its landmines. Of the 84 countries riddled with the unexploded killers, Cambodia has been one of the most proactive at seeking to rid itself of the threat. However the report noted that after having signed the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty which binds Cambodia to clearing all its landmines by 2010, the government along with nongovernmental organizations had much work ahead of it. According to spokesmen from the Cambodian Campaign to Ban Landmines and Handicap International Christian Provost, the 2010 deadline is unrealistic despite the recent progress made in disarming the mines. One official from Handicap International Christian Provost stated, “If they want to clear everything it will take 150 years more.” Despite the promising Landmine Monitor Report, Cambodia still has an estimated four to six million undetonated landmines, which could lead to the maiming or deaths of as many people. (Xinhua, November 25, 2005)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Up to 100,000 Congolese displaced in renewed effort to clear east of rebels: Efforts to disarm Mai Mai militiamen in north Katanga province had been successful until mid-November, when relations soured and fighting resumed, according to the United Nations mission to the Congo, MONUC. Between 50,000 and 100,000 Congolese citizens have been displaced by recent fighting as joint Congolese and UN forces have tried to force rebel groups out of the eastern part of the country. The army has estimated that nearly 2,000 militiamen have been operating almost unabatedly in the area locals call the “Triangle of Death.” “We initially tried psychological operations but we had to turn to military operations when they refused to disarm,” Congolese General Widi Mbuilu Divioka said November 24. MONUC reported that most of the newly displaced persons had been making their way to neighboring Tanzania and Burundi, which are still home to several hundred thousand Congolese refugees that have not returned since war in the country officially ended in 2003. (MONUC, November 23, 25; UNHCR, November 24; UN News, November 25, 2005)

Security Council unveils action plan for DRC following recent visit: On November 22, members of the United Nations Security Council recommended dozens of actions they thought necessary to ensure fair and safe elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Several Security Council diplomats traveled to the Great Lakes region from November 4 to 11 on a fact-finding mission aimed at identifying measures which all countries in the region could undertake

to help bring peace to the DRC after years of fighting what many have called “Africa’s World War.” Among the recommendations to the DRC was that the transitional government make it a top priority to pay the military regularly, something the government has been repeatedly lambasted for failing to do. But the Council maintained that an even more important objective was to guarantee the legitimacy of the transitional government by making certain Great Lakes nations “respect fully the sovereignty of neighbouring States and in particular refrain from any use of force outside [their] borders.” The repeated invasion of eastern DRC by Uganda and Rwanda between 1997 and 2003 in efforts to pursue rebel groups has often been blamed for escalating the war, in which nearly four million people died. (CNN, November 23; UN News, November 22, 2005)

MONUC denounces conditions of detention sites for rebels: On November 25, Fernando Castanon, director of the human rights section of the United Nations mission MONUC, released his most recent report on the state of prisons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). According to Castanon, although having an estimated 10,000 prisoners in the 52 operating prisons for the country of 60 million amounts to a low incarceration rate, the conditions of the prisons remains “deplorable.” “The vast majority of prisons were built before the country’s independence [and] fell into ruins several years ago,” he said. “In several cases, prisoners are detained in facilities designed for another purpose – such as plants or warehouses.” The gravest concern, however, remains the inability to provide adequate nutrition and health services to inmates. While many of the inmates have been rebels captured by army forces, many others have simply been civilians convicted of minor offenses. Yet due to lack of food, “it is not exaggerated to state that ... being sentenced to several months or years of imprisonment, sometimes for minor offenses, amounts to being condemned to death, as the risk of dying from hunger in prison is so high,” Castanon concluded. (MONUC, November 25, 2005)

GENDER AND PEACE

Liberia’s president-elect begins West African peace tour: Liberia’s president-elect, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was to begin a tour November 29 to discuss peace with the leaders of neighboring countries. The countries she was set to visit were Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. Having won Liberia’s presidential election in early November, Johnson-Sirleaf sought to use the West African tour to achieve both national and regional peace through the discussion of post-war reconstruction, international investment, and border security with unstable Côte d’Ivoire. In Nigeria, she was to speak with President Olusegun Obasanjo about the status of former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who remained in exile in the country despite being wanted for war crimes in Sierra Leone. In spite of obstacles in her own country, Johnson-Sirleaf remained optimistic. “The next challenge will be to get our economic and financial house in order, so that we can manage our own resources, be able to tackle the development challenges we face, and start the process of reconstruction,” she said. Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated former World Bank employee, is set to take office January 16 as the first democratically elected president in Liberia since 1969, and the first female head of state on the continent. (IRIN, November 29, 2005)

Africa’s Rights of Women protocol goes into effect: Coinciding with the start of the campaign, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, the protocol of the Rights of Women section of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights came into effect November 25. Fifteen

African countries have signed the recently ratified protocol that “explicitly sets forth the reproductive right of women to medical abortion when pregnancy results from rape or incest or when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the health or life of the mother.” The protocol also allows women rights against female genital mutilation and restricts the use of gender-based violence in advertising or pornography. Recognized in the protocol are specifically vulnerable groups, such as widows and elderly or disabled women. Though 15 countries have already agreed to the protocol, nongovernmental organizations such as Equality Now are pushing for the remaining 38 African states that have not ratified the protocol to do so. (CISA, November 28, 2005)

Turkish parliament and NGOs discuss women’s rights and protection: The Turkish parliament met November 23 to discuss women’s rights, as well as developments regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The meeting, which included both government actors and nongovernmental organizations, addressed Turkish women’s rights, and specifically how CEDAW could better assist the government in protecting women. Commented Turkish State Minister Nimet Cubukcu, “We aim to overcome the shortcomings in implementation of legal regulations in this field and we need cooperation among state institutions, local administrators, media, and private sector to that end.” CEDAW, adopted by the UN Security Council in 1979, has been called an international bill of rights for women that defines various forms of discrimination against women. In October 2005 the European Union allowed Turkey to begin membership negotiations, however due to Turkey’s previous human rights abuses, and arguable gender inequalities, attaining EU membership may take years. (Turkish Press, November 24, 2005)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Judge places Chilean dictator under house arrest hours before his posting bail: A Chilean judge placed former dictator Augusto Pinochet under house arrest November 23, just hours before Pinochet’s 90th birthday when he was to post bail set by another judge. Judge Victor Montiglio issued the order and charged Pinochet for his role in the disappearance of seven people in his 1974 Operation Columbo. “Without a doubt, this is the worst birthday he could have from a judicial standpoint,” political scientist Ricardo Israel said. “This is by far the most delicate situation he’s gone through.” Although Pinochet granted himself diplomatic immunity for life just before leaving office, he been formally charged two other times for human rights abuses he allegedly ordered during his 1973 to 1990 rule. However, both previous trials were thrown out due to the aging leader’s health, which has deteriorated as a result of numerous mild strokes. Human rights lawyers say 119 members of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) were taken prisoner by Chile’s secret police and killed in 1974 during Operation Colombo, a fact disguised by the Pinochet regime’s planting fake news stories claiming the dissidents died fighting among themselves. (Reuters, November 24, 2005)

Russia approves initial stages of banning foreign human rights groups: On November 24, a controversial bill was overwhelmingly approved by the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, that would effectively ban foreign human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations (NGO). Members of the Russian parliament maintain that the bill was not meant to be an affront to human rights, but rather would give the Kremlin greater maneuverability in combating terrorism, money laundering, and extremism. However, numerous

international NGOs, including the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), see the move as a return to a Soviet-style “assault on freedom.” “NGOs remain among the last independent voices that can criticize the government and demand accountability in Russia,” said Executive Director of HRW’s Europe and Central Asia Division Holly Cartner. Conversely, Russian members of parliament (MPs) see the bill as a step forward for accountability in the human rights sector. “The Justice Ministry should check,” said one MP, “to find out cases when money intended for homeless children was spent, for instance, on a Mercedes car.” The bill is being fast-tracked in order to reach the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin before the end of the year. ([HRW](#), November 22; [NZ Herald](#), November 24, 2005)

KOSOVO

UN tribunal convicts Kosovo Albanian: The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has convicted the first Kosovo Albanian for war crimes stemming from the conflict in the Balkans during the late 1990s. Haradin Bala was handed a thirteen-year jail sentence for committing torture and murder at a prison camp run by the Kosovo Liberation Army in 1998. His commanding officer, Fatmir Limaj, and another co-defendant, Isak Musliu, were cleared of all charges and ordered to be freed. Bala was convicted of detaining 35 individuals in 1998 at a camp under inhuman conditions and of torturing and executing several of them. The presiding judge in the case, Kevin Parker, said Bala’s presence at the camp had been proven beyond a doubt, but that there had not been enough evidence to link Limaj and Musliu to the crimes committed there. With this conviction, Bala became the first Kosovo Albanian to be convicted at The Hague, which has previously convicted numerous Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims. In the past, several Serbian politicians have accused the tribunal of failing to properly prosecute Kosovo Albanians. ([BBC](#), November 30, 2005)

LIBYA

Supreme Court delays ruling on medics’ case: The decision to execute five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor charged with deliberately infecting Libyan children with HIV/AIDS was to have been made November 15, but the ruling was delayed until January 31, 2006. Libyan Foreign Minister Abdul Rahman Shalgam said November 28 that the five Bulgarian nurses sentenced to death might be freed if Tripoli received humanitarian aid to treat the victims. At the Euro-Mediterranean summit in Barcelona, Shalgam stated that he was not talking about blood money but humanitarian aid: “We have to find out a solution for the families of the children who died if these families accept that; medicines and good hospitals should be provided to patient children, and then the penalty will be lifted immediately.” Shalgam also indicated that Libya has spent \$60 million so far on the HIV-infected children. Minister Shalgam said that Bulgaria’s media had wrongfully interpreted the words of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi that Tripoli was ready to “horse-trade” the nurses for former Libyan intelligence officer Abdelmased Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, convicted for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. ([News24](#), November 28; [Reuters](#), November 29; [Sofia News Agency](#), November 29, 2005)

NEPAL

Maoists and parties reach agreement: Armed Maoist rebels and an alliance of seven mainstream political parties produced a 12-point memorandum of understanding November 22. The agreement calls for, among other actions, a boycott of upcoming municipal elections, the

formation of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, and supervision, preferably by the United Nations (UN), of the Maoists' and the Royal Nepalese Army's (RNA) weapons. Political analysts, international organizations, and civil society actors welcomed the agreement, calling it a "triumph for democracy." UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also welcomed the pact and was said to be studying the details. Annan strongly encouraged the Maoists to extend the unilateral ceasefire which was to end December 2. India and the United States cautiously welcomed the agreement, and U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty apprised Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey November 24 that the U.S. supports the pact. On November 25, in the first official government reaction, Minister of Information and Communications Tanka Dhakal said that the government was moving ahead for successful implementation of the multi-party democratic system by restoring peace in the country. Dhakal also said that the government rejected the call for a constituent assembly and insisted on holding elections. Communist party leader Madhav Kumar Nepal said that the political parties could accept a ceremonial monarchy if the King cancelled the municipal elections and corrected his "mistakes" committed October 4, 2002 and February 1, 2005, referring to his dissolution of parliament in 2002 and royal takeover of the country in 2004. However, Maoist leader Prachanda ruled out the possibility of any compromise with the monarchy. ([Kantipur Online](#), November 23, 25, 27; [Kathmandu Post](#), November 23, 24, 25; [Nepalnews](#), 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, November, 2005)

Government raids Sagarmatha Radio: The Supreme Court ordered the government not to ban any FM radio station from airing news until the court gives its final decision on a writ petition challenging the October 9 media law. The court also issued a stay order to the government not to implement its November 27 order to shut down Sagarmatha Radio. The government began a series of assaults against FM radio stations on October 21, when it raided Kantipur FM Radio station and seized its equipment. On November 11, the Supreme Court ruled that an interim order could not be issued on the Kantipur FM case. On November 27, security personnel and Ministry of Information and Communications officials raided Sagarmatha Radio and seized the equipment used for relaying the BBC World Service. The government also stopped airing the relay transmission of BBC World Service on 103 FM through the government-owned Radio Nepal to prevent a planned interview with Maoist leader Prachanda. Acting Executive Director of Radio Nepal Rabin Sharma said that it was a technical problem and had nothing to do with the government action. The government has been continuously hampering BBC World Service since February 1. The BBC 103 FM returned to broadcast November 28. Home Minister Dan Bahadur Shahi denied that the government gave any order to shut down Sagarmatha Radio, maintaining that they simply prevented the FM station from airing the interview with Prachanda and the FM closed the station itself. The Sagarmatha Radio started to broadcast again November 29. ([Kantipu Online](#), [Kathmandu Post](#), [Nepalnews](#), November 27, 28, 29, 30, 2005)

China arms RNA per agreement: Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) General Pyar Jung Thapa confirmed the November 25 news that the RNA received military hardware from China per an October 21 agreement. Although India, the United States, and the United Kingdom have suspended military aid, China pledged to provide approximately \$1 million in such aid. In a November 25 interview, RNA Brigadier General Dipak Kumar Gurung said that there were no lethal arms in the consignment. Communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal urged China not to provide military assistance to the RNA. On November 14, U.S. President George Bush signed a bill setting out strict conditions on military assistance to Nepal. Most of the conditions related to

protecting human rights, while the rest related to civil liberties. (Kantipur Online, November 15, 25; Nepalnews, November 25, 27, 2005)

PHILIPPINES

Tensions in Sulu increase as fight against terrorism negatively affects local population:

Hostilities on the island of Sulu, a small, southern most island of the Philippines, which started about two weeks ago, were aggravated by military planes bombing Mt. Tumatangis in Indanan town November 24, thus putting into question U.S. military presence on the island. Sulu is of strategic importance to the U.S.' global war on terror campaign as the Sulu Sea connects the countries of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which have recently formed an anti-terror alliance to pre-empt attacks from the Jemaah Islamiyah. The presence of the U.S. military on the island was thus far justified by the training of Filipino military forces to fight terrorism. However, the recent bombing in Indanan town aroused general discontentment as the "damage the military caused to peace efforts is incalculable" said Tabang Mindanaw, a multisectoral body advocating for peace in Mindanao. In fact offensives and bombings have essentially taken place in areas under the control of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), thus seemingly giving the Philippines' government license to use the war on terror as an excuse to protract a war between the Filipino Armed Forces and the MNLF. Furthermore, the alleged participation of U.S. troops in operations against Abu Sayyaf gunmen loyal to former MNLF chair Nur Misuari is raising suspicion as to the extent of the U.S.' real commitment to peacemaking as opposed to defeating terrorism. The war in Sulu has contributed to the displacement of more than 700 families from the towns of Indanan and Panamo. (inq7, November 25, 27 and 28, 2005)

President Arroyo cleared of poll fraud: Former election commissioner, Virgilio Garcilano, whose appointment to the election agency ended in June, came out from hiding November 27 and cleared President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo of electoral fraud. President Arroyo had been recorded talking to Garcilano about vote-counting during the June 2004 presidential elections, and consequently was accused of cheating. Though attempts by the opposition to impeach President Arroyo were defeated by her allies in the lower house of Congress in September 2005, suspicion had persisted so far. However, Garcilano revealed, during an interview with ABS-CBN television during the week of November 21, that he and the president had indeed had a conversation during the counting of the votes, but that the president was only "asking why her advantage over FPJ (Fernando Poe Jr.) had been reduced to 892,000." He denied leaving the country for trips to Singapore, London, and South America, declaring that he had gone into hiding following the reception of "intimidating text messages" and death threats through telephone calls. President Arroyo was accused of ordering Garcilano to rig the results to make her win by at least a million-vote margin over her closest rival. Garcilano's comment, "We are talking of the votes already counted, so how can we rig the elections?" thus supported her denial of the allegations. (Pacific Magazine, November 28, 2005)

RWANDA

Publicity battle follows former Lieutenant's claims that president started 1994 genocide:

Lieutenant Abdul Ruzibiza of the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) has been the subject of heated public exchanges in recent weeks following the release of a recent book authored by him. Among other things, Ruzibiza's book on the "secret history of Africa" alleges that President Paul Kagame, then commander of the armed wing of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), known as

the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), ordered then President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane shot down. While not the first to claim Kagame ordered the shooting, Ruzibiza's recent allegations have aroused a greater public debate than others. The national newspaper, The New Times, ran numerous articles during the weeks of November 20 and 27 impugning Ruzibiza's character in an attempt to temper his claims. However, many civilians in the capital city of Kigali seemed convinced of the truth of the claims and have led public demonstrations asking for greater disclosure from Kagame. Most analysts agree that the plane crash was the definitive moment in beginning the genocide in April 1994 that killed 800,000 people, a possibility of which Ruzibiza says Kagame was well aware. (AllAfrica, New Times, November 25; Reuters, November 18, 2005)

SRI LANKA

People's Alliance candidate elected new president: Mahinda Rajapakse, the ruling party's candidate in the November 17 presidential elections, was sworn in as the country's new president November 19. While Election Commissioner Danyananda Disanayake announced Rajapakse's victory on November 18, the release of official figures revealed that his was a tight victory. In fact, main adversary and United Freedom Party candidate Ranil Wickremasinghe obtained 48.41 percent of the votes while Rajapakse had 50.33 percent, thus only edging out Wickremasinghe by a margin of less than 2 percentage points. Analysts view the new presidency as a possible additional obstacle to the already stalled peace talks between Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels and the government, primarily due to Rajapakse's hard line on the role of Norway as mediator, and his recent rejection of an exclusive Tamil homeland. Moreover, Rajapakse's appointment to the premiership, November 21, of former Deputy Defense Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, a fervent Sinhalese nationalist, "sends a message that President Rajapakse intends to take a hardline stance on the peace process," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, director of the Colombo-based think-tank Centre for Policy Alternatives. (Asian Tribune, November 18; Asia Times, November 23; Reuters, November 21; The Hindu, November 19, 2005)

President's stance on peace process may lead to relapse into conflict: New president Mahinda Rajapakse told parliament November 25 that the government would start direct talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on possible amendments to the 2002 ceasefire agreement. The main amendments would halt "terrorist acts" and child recruitment by the LTTE. Furthermore, as he was sworn in as new president, Rajapakse reiterated his opposition to the LTTE's demand for a separate state and reaffirmed his intentions to create a unitary state structure. LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran waited for Great Heroes Day on November 28 (a commemoration of fallen Tamil fighters), to announce that the Tamil people have "reached a brink of utter frustration." He explained that the LTTE will wait to see how the new president will handle the peace process and whether he intends to offer justice to the Tamil population. If the government fails to come up with a satisfactory political solution, the LTTE will intensify its struggle for self-determination next year, Prabhakaran warned. The LTTE has been fighting for a separate homeland as "the Sinhala nation neither assimilates and integrates our people to live in co-existence nor does it allow our people to secede and lead a separate existence," said Prabhakaran November 26. Many analysts believe that the truce is at its lowest point since the Norwegian brokered ceasefire in 2002. (Bloomberg, November 28; CBC News, November 25, 28; Tamil Canadian, November 26, 2005)

SUDAN

Darfur peace talks resume with rebels in show of unity: Rival leaders from Darfur's largest rebel movement displayed a unified position at the launch of the seventh round of peace talks with the Sudanese government November 29, acting on a pledge to halt infighting that has hampered progress in previous rounds. The Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), whose two rival leaders – Minni Arcua Minnawi and Abdel Wahed Mohammed el-Nur – agreed just before the talks in Abuja to put their arguments on hold, along with the smaller Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), said they were committed to reaching a just and lasting solution to the Darfur conflict. "Both movements have reached agreement on a common document in order to achieve as much benefit and success as possible for the people of Darfur," said JEM chief negotiator Ahmed Tugod on behalf of both rebel groups. The rebels, the government, and the African Union mediation team all expressed hope that this seventh round of talks would be decisive and that the rebels' recent efforts to unify their positions would ease the negotiations. Minnawi and Nur, who both claim the chairmanship of the SLA, both attended the launch ceremony but did not give speeches. Minnawi, whose participation was seen as crucial given that he commands loyalty over the majority of troops on the ground, had boycotted the last round of negotiations. In previous rounds of talks, each movement spoke separately at the launch ceremony and in closed-door talks. This time, the SLA and JEM delegations were to alternate in taking the lead role in talks with the government. In New York, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the resumption of the Abuja talks and appealed to all parties to stop all violence immediately and negotiate "a just and comprehensive peace agreement." The SLA and JEM took up arms in early 2003 in Darfur over what they saw as discrimination and neglect by the Sudanese government, which responded by arming local militias to fight the rebels. (Reuters, November 28, 29, 2005)

Darfur rebels attack town, demand seat at talks: A rebel faction said it attacked a town in West Darfur state November 29, killing 37 soldiers and police, in order to push for its inclusion in peace talks which opened in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, that same day. The Sudanese army confirmed troop movements in the area where the rebels said they carried out their attack but gave no further details. A source in the aid community confirmed an attack on a police station in the town of Sirba and said three policemen had been wounded. The rebels, the breakaway National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD), are not represented at the African Union (AU)-mediated talks. AU mediator Sam Ibok said that resorting to violence in Darfur was not a ticket to inclusion in the talks. "All the people of Darfur will have the chance to express themselves in the peace process and there will be a time to involve groups like the NMRD, but not until the talks have made sufficient progress," he added. NMRD political leader Khalil Abdallah said the rebels were retaliating against government strikes on their bases in the Jabel Moun area near the Chadian border earlier this month. "For one year we are cooperating with the African Union and still we are not part of the negotiations in Abuja," he said. The attack occurred as representatives of the two main Darfur rebel groups – the Sudanese Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement – and the government prepared to open the seventh round of negotiations. (Reuters, November 29, 2005)

\$20 million given for emergency programs in south as UN Refugee Agency prepares for large-scale returns: The Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for Sudan signed an agreement November 25 with the southern government to disburse \$20 million for emergency programs in the region, where a 21-year civil war has left two million people dead. The MDTF, which pools resources

from various donors into one common fund, is administered by the World Bank with an oversight committee that includes Sudanese authorities, the United Nations, and major donors. These, the first MDTF monies to be disbursed in Sudan, will provide harmonized funding for priority areas identified by the governments of national unity and southern Sudan. The emergency package totaling \$27 million – including an additional \$7 million from the southern Sudan government – was to be used for books, medication, equipment for the new government offices in the southern capital Juba and the 10 southern states, and the services of an international company to handle procurement. In addition, three programs – one in the south and two in the north – have been prepared for agreement in December, while budgets and priorities for programs to be implemented in 2006 have been set, according to World Bank country director for Sudan Ishac Diwan. A \$150 million program for the south, two-thirds of which would be funded from the government's own resources, would focus on infrastructure development and urban rehabilitation. Priority areas for 2006 were to include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; national transport; food security; capacity building in health and education; and rural development. The move came just days before UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis announced November 29 that the UN agency is gearing up to assist Sudanese who wish to return to their villages. The refugees began to return after the January 9 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ended the civil war that displaced four million people within the country and made refugees of another 500,000 in neighboring countries. The official start of the repatriation operation is scheduled to begin before the end of the year, provided the security situation stabilizes, the agency said. (IRIN, UN News, November 29, 2005)

UGANDA

Rebels ask for peace talks with government: The rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has called for a resumption of peace talks with the government under Yoweri Museveni, a call mediators say rekindles hope for a peaceful settlement of the 20-year civil war in the north of the country. The chief mediator in the talks, former Ugandan Interior Minister Betty Bigombe, said November 30 that LRA deputy commander Vincent Otti had contacted her and expressed willingness to resume talks with the government. Otti, the LRA second-in-command, called the BBC November 29 to announce that the rebels were willing to negotiate an end to the war that has left tens of thousands dead and 1.5 million displaced in the north. He told BBC radio that he was willing to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) which in October had issued arrest warrants for LRA leader Joseph Kony, Otti, and three other top LRA commanders, one of whom – Dominic Ongwen – had since died. Otti added, however, that government officials should also face justice at the same court as they too "were responsible for some of the crimes committed in northern Uganda." "I am Lt.-Gen. Vincent Otti and want [to] talk with the government of Uganda to end the rebellion, because now we fought for 20 years – we are ready for this talk from today," Otti said via satellite telephone. Ugandan Interior Minister Ruhakana Rugunda has welcomed the announcement saying that if the overture was serious, it was a welcome development. "The government will seize any opportunity to bring the suffering of people in northern Uganda to an end," he said. "The government is waiting and the government will be ready to meet a delegation of the Lord's Resistance Army anytime." The rebels want to replace Museveni's government with one based on the Biblical Ten Commandments and are accused of massive abuses in the region, including the abduction of some 20,000 children who are used as porters, sex slaves, and fighters. (BBC, IRIN, November 30, 2005)

Lawyers hold protest at High Court: Ugandan lawyers held a one-day strike November 28 to protest what they called military interference in the trial of detained opposition leader Kizza Besigye and 21 other suspects on charges of treason and terrorism. “This protest is against the backdrop of repeated overt and covert actions by the executive [including] the deliberate nonobservance and disrespect of judicial authority,” declared president of the Uganda Law Society (ULS) Moses Adriko. The lawyers were particularly angered by the November 16 siege of the High Court by security personnel wearing black T-shirts – identified by the media as the “Black Mambas Urban Hit Squad” – and wielding assault rifles in a failed bid to re-arrest 14 alleged accomplices of Besigye. Ugandan authorities tightened security and banned public demonstrations in support of Besigye before he was brought to the High Court November 24 to face treason and rape charges. The authorities also forbade all radio programs to discuss the case. Instead of being taken to the High Court where he was supposed to sign bail papers ensuring his release, Besigye was brought before a military tribunal and charged with terrorism and illegal possession of weapons, before being returned to custody. “We are also protesting the evolving practice of simultaneously trying suspects in civilian courts and the court martial for the same related offences,” Adriko added. Besigye, the leader of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), is widely thought to be President Yoweri Museveni’s main potential challenger in presidential elections scheduled for March 2006. Besigye was arrested November 14 upon his return from a four-year self-imposed exile in South Africa, and charged with planning to overthrow the government; he was also accused of committing rape in 1997. (Reuters, November 28; AllAfrica, BBC, IRIN, November 29, 2005)

Sudan extends deal on hunt for rebels: Sudan renewed a deal enabling Ugandan troops to pursue leaders of the notorious Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group deep into its territory, according to a statement issued November 23 by Ugandan People’s Defense Force (UPDF) spokesman Capt. Paddy Ankunda. The agreement extended until January 19, 2006, a protocol signed October 7 which abandoned the 100 km limit on Ugandan incursions into Sudan, following the issuing by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of arrest warrants for five of the LRA’s top commanders. The original agreement had expired November 7. Until the ICC warrants were issued, Ugandan forces had license under a 2002 agreement to pursue LRA fighters up to a so-called “Red Line” 100 km inside neighboring Sudan. Ugandan military leaders have long upheld the conviction that LRA leader Joseph Kony is hiding north of the line. (Reuters, November 23, 2005)

Opposition party rules out boycott of upcoming elections as Obote widow elected party leader: The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) ruled out the possibility of boycotting the March 2006 general elections, saying it was ready for the political battle come what may. A statement by party publicist Wafula Oguttu November 28 alleged that President Museveni and his allies might have hoped that with FDC leader Kizza Besigye behind bars, the party would consider boycotting the forthcoming general elections. In related news, Miria Kalule Obote was November 27 elected President of the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), replacing her late husband, Apollo Milton Obote. Obote polled 280 votes against Samia Bugwe MP, Agrey Awori, and Bukhooli North MP, Patrick Mwendha, who polled 12 votes and 147 votes respectively. In her acceptance speech, Obote said her election was a “milestone in the history of the party and the history of the country” in that “for the first time a woman has been elected to lead a major

party.” Obote and Besigye are both poised to contest the 2006 general elections with the DP’s Ssebaana Kiztio and the incumbent President Museveni among others. (AllAfrica, November 28, 29, 2005)

ZIMBABWE

Mugabe’s party emerges victorious from Senate elections: Highly publicized national elections for a newly created second chamber of parliament took place November 26. As expected, President Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party secured an overwhelming majority by landing fifty-nine of a possible sixty-six seats. Voter turnout was noticeably low with most news agencies placing the number at between ten and fifteen percent. These statistics prompted Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai to thank supporters for heeding his call to boycott what he called “a meaningless election.” Tsvangirai stated that the low turnout signaled a “vote of no confidence” in President Mugabe’s regime. Many experts however have said that it was the MDC which emerged most damaged by these elections due to its split over whether to participate or not. Tsvangirai ordered party members to boycott the elections, while a very prominent group of MDC members led an effort to participate. This has created a major schism within the only active opposition party in the country. (BBC, Reuters, November 28, 2005)

Tsvangirai suspended as leader of MDC: In an internal letter obtained by Agence France-Pressé November 28, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) vice-president Gibson Sibanda stated that a national disciplinary committee had met the previous week and suspended the party’s leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, from his position as party president “with immediate effect.” Tsvangirai was also barred from visiting any of the party’s offices. Tsvangirai responded by calling these developments “most unfortunate” and saying that “the MDC constitution allows nobody except the party congress to suspend or dismiss the president.” As of yet there has not been a public counterpoint by Sibanda. Analysts called this the most dramatic event yet, one that highlighted the major divisions within Zimbabwe’s only major opposition party. (AFP, November 28, 2005)

U.S. calls Zimbabwe Senate elections a “nonevent”: Senate elections held November 29 were greeted by the United States State Department as a “non-event.” When asked for a comment on the elections, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack argued that they were created by President Robert Mugabe purely as a “source of patronage for ruling party politicians.” He then added, “So in terms of democracy – and we talk about elections as being part of a democracy – this was really a nonevent.” The week before the elections, the United States government widened economic sanctions against the southern African country, freezing the assets of an additional 128 people and 33 groups that Washington said “undermined democratic reform.” In recent months, Washington has stepped up its criticism of the Mugabe regime, and its ambassador there, Christopher Dell, has come under fire from the Zimbabwe state press for meddling in Zimbabwe’s internal affairs. (BBC, Reuters, November 29, 2005)