

Conflict Update
Countries of Focus for the Institute's Dedicatory Conference
June 20, 2001
(Volume 1, Number 2)

The conflict updates are written by the summer 2001 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. The interns are Jennifer Fullerton (University of San Diego), Scott Huntley (University of North Carolina), Sarah Laubach (University of San Diego), and Tiffany Santos (University of California at Berkeley).

The countries for the conflict updates are also the countries that have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute's dedicatory conference, "Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century," December 5-7, 2001.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

A DRC update will appear in next week's Conflict Update.

GUATEMALA

Human rights activist survives attack: Amnesty International officials announced June 15 that researcher Barbara Bocek was attacked June 11 in her Guatemala City hotel room during a failed kidnapping attempt. Bocek, an American investigator with Amnesty, had been investigating reports of persecution of local human rights activists. Interior Minister Byron Barrientos and National Police spokesman Faustino Sanchez remained skeptical of reports of the attack. Amnesty officials said that the organization would continue to investigate human rights violations in Guatemala. Human rights advocates have continued to be targets for violence. Guatemala ended its 36-year civil war that resulted in more than 250 thousand deaths and thousands "disappeared" with a 1996 agreement between the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union. (AP, New York Times, June 15, 2001)

President proposes a nationwide state of alarm: President Alfonso Portillo proposed a state of alarm June 20 following the country's largest jail break of 78 inmates. The implementation of a 30-day state of alarm would require ratification by Congress. If approved by Congress, authorities would be permitted to restrict citizens' actions and detain suspects without warrants for a limited time without due process. It would also give officials other than the police the power to stop, search, and interrogate citizens. Many Guatemalans and human rights groups voiced concerns about extending the police's power since the state committed many abuses during the nation's 36-year civil war. (BBC, EFE June 20, 2001)

MACEDONIA

Peace talks crumble: Macedonian president Boris Trajkovski announced June 20 that peace talks aimed at resolving the four-month conflict in Macedonia have come to an unexpected and unsuccessful halt. Trajkovski announced that ethnic Albanian politicians from the two main Albanian political parties, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and the smaller but more militant Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), have increased their demands. Trajkovski has stated that Albanian leaders were calling for a separatist “two-nation state.” Albanian rebel commanders of the National Liberation Army (NLA) insisted that these demands are the same demands ethnic Albanians have been making for the past ten years: increased rights in the areas of education, employment, and language. The talks centered on the Albanian political leaders’ insistence upon modifying the country’s constitution, according to a source close to Trajkovski. The talks stalled June 17 over the Albanian political leaders’ demand for an Albanian vice-president or high representative in the administration. NATO has remained ready to deploy disarmament forces that would supervise the collection of the NLA’s arms and uniforms upon the signing of a peace agreement. The European Union set a June 25 deadline to create a working plan to end the violence. The conflict, which broke out in February in the northern mountainous region bordering Kosovo but moved to the outskirts of the capital city of Skopje this month, has created an influx of about 50,000 refugees in neighboring Kosovo and Serbia. (AFP, June 18, 19; BBC, CCN, June 20, 2001)

NEPAL

Massacre in palace affects peace talks: Maoist rebels have stated that the massacre of the Royal Family June 1 was the result of a conspiracy, and rejected the official reports that have blamed Prince Dipendra for the attack. According to Maoist chief Prachand, the late King Birendra’s brother, Dhirendra, met with Maoist rebels days before the massacre and said Birendra was interested in a meeting between Maoist and government officials. Dhirendra said Birendra viewed the Maoist struggle as a patriotic movement. During Birendra’s reign, he refused to use strong military force against the rebels, desiring a more peaceful resolution. Human rights activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar, who has been trying to mediate between the government and rebels for more than a year, said the recent royal massacre has affected the prospects of peace talks. United States Ambassador Ralph Frank said armed Maoist rebels are advancing with “no viable opposition in rural areas” and are rapidly trying to exploit the vacuum left by the murdered royal family. The Maoist rebels have an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 guerilla fighters and have been battling security forces since 1996, leaving more than 1,600 people dead. (Bangkok Post, June 19; BBC, June 18; Hindustantimes.com, June 16, 2001)

Clashes between police and rebels result in deaths, destruction and kidnapping: Four Maoists were killed and five policemen injured June 15 in an exchange of gunfire at Barchen village. Two Maoist workers were killed June 16 when the Nepalese police patrol and Maoist workers clashed. Maoist rebels killed a local man in Morang district, bombed businesses in Biratnagar, the hometown of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, and destroyed three abandoned police posts in the Jhapa district in southeast Nepal. Three

police were kidnapped June 18 from a public meeting in Jumla, 420 km northwest of Katmandu. The Nepalese police have been fighting the Maoist rebels since 1996. In mid-May the government ordered military troops to assist the police's effort in subduing the rebels. (AFP, June 19; Nepalnews.com, June 16, 17, 18, 2001)