

Conflict Update
Countries of Focus for the Institute's Dedicatory Conference
August 10, 2001
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Choice of countries for updates: The countries for the conflict updates are 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.

Source information: Information presented in this update is condensed from wire and newspaper reports from Lexis/Nexis and from electronic sites on the World Wide Web. Complete biographical information is unavailable from these services, but every attempt has been made to properly cite information and give credit to source materials. This update is intended for use by IPJ staff and associates for informational purposes only. As the material in this update is condensed, and does not directly quote the primary source, information from the update should not be quoted.

The conflict updates are written by the summer 2001 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego. 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)

UPDATE SUMMARY

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Rebel group expels founding members; Rebel group claims victory over pro-DRC forces; NGOs say humanitarian situation dire

GUATEMALA

President issues state of emergency

MACEDONIA

Parties sign peace agreement

NEPAL

Government releases Maoists

UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AP	=	Associated Press
AFP	=	Agence France Presse
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	=	Cable News Network
EFE	=	Agencia EFE (Spanish New Agency)
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network (UN Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs Information Network: www.unog.ch)
JED	=	Journaliste En Danger
NCN	=	New Congo Net
PANA	=	Pan African News Agency

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Rebel group expels founding members: The Goma based Rally for Congolese for Democracy (RCD-Goma) expelled 14 of its 50 founding members July 27, accusing them of “desertion, high treason, and political wandering.” RCD-Goma spokesman Jean Pierre Lola Kisanga said the decision was made in an effort to regularize the status of its membership in preparation of an August 2 meeting in Lusaka of the signatories of the 1999 Lusaka Accord. Those expelled include Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, who seceded from the movement in 1999 and formed the RCD-Kisingani, later renamed RCD – Liberation Movement (ML). Wamba has been lobbying for the RCD-ML to be included as a separate party to the inter-Congolese dialogue, a move the RCD-Goma viewed as contrary to its own interests. Wamba accused RCD-Goma of expelling the members in an effort to exclude his group from participation in the inter-Congolese dialogue. The inter-Congolese dialogue, provided for under the Lusaka Accord, would bring together all the signatories in an effort to continue the peace process in the DRC. Both the RCD-Goma, backed by Rwanda, and the RCD-ML, backed by Uganda, have been fighting DRC forces in an attempt to overthrow the government since 1998. Recent reports have indicated that as many as 2.5 million people have been killed as a result of the three-year conflict. (IRIN, July 31, August 2; PANA, July 28, 2001)

Rebel group claims victory over pro-DRC forces: The rebel movement, RCD-Goma, seized control of the town of Lokandu in eastern DRC August 1, after two days of intense fighting with government backed Mai-Mai and Interhamwe militia forces who had occupied the town since mid-July. The Rwandan armed forces have launched a two-front military offensive against the militia groups from within the DRC by supporting the RCD and with government troops along the Rwanda – DRC border. The fighting has not been considered a violation of the 1999 ceasefire agreement because the Interhamwe and Mai-Mai did not sign the Lusaka Accord. The latest violence began amid accusations that the DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda have continued to violate the mandate of the ceasefire. The RCD-Goma accused the Kabila government July 28 of violating the Lusaka Accord by ordering the reactivation of forces loyal to Kinshasa, namely the Congolese Armed Forces, the Interhamwe, and Zimbabwean soldiers. (BBC, August 2; IRIN, July 31, August 2; PANA, July 26; TOMRIC News Agency, August 6, 2001)

NGOs say humanitarian situation dire: A group of aid agencies operating in the DRC released a report August 6 saying that the war in the Congo has led to one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Authored by Oxfam, Save the Children, and Christian Aid, the report linked the war that began in August 1998 to appalling levels of hunger, disease, and death, and countless abuses of human rights. The report estimated that 16 million Congolese are starving, more than two million people have been displaced by the war, and that in some parts of the country, infant mortality rates are as high as 40 percent. In addition to the problems of hunger and disease, the report warns that the current situation has weakened the educational system, which could lead to a long-term socio-economic crisis. Criticizing the response of the international community as inadequate, Oxfam’s Vincent Lalai said “What is being done right now is so miniscule that it’s not even a drop in the ocean.” Aid agencies have only recently been allowed into previously inaccessible

areas of the country, enabling them to assess the damage done by the conflict. (IRIN, August 7; The Monitor, August 9; Oxfam International, August 6; The Post, August 6, 2001)

GUATEMALA

President issues state of emergency: President Alfonso Portillo issued a state of emergency in Totonicapan, 120 miles west of the capital, August 2 in response to violent protests held the week of July 30. Portillo lifted the state of emergency August 6 due to statements by the Catholic Church and human rights organizations August 4 against the state of emergency, which suspended constitutional rights to assemble, protest, possess weapons and go on strike, as well as the rights not to be subjected to unreasonable arrests or interrogations. Bishops Conference President Victor Hugo Martinez had urged Portillo to lift the measure, enter into dialogue and investigate reports of government corruption. Portillo announced to the nation in a televised speech that there was no backtracking on the tax increase. He also said the tax increase was necessary to pay for social and other programs contemplated in the 1996 peace agreement, that ended the 36-year civil war. In that agreement, the 12 percent tax increase was issued in order to pay for programs in the predominantly Mayan areas of the country. The Mayan population suffered the most in the nation's civil war. (BBC, August 4; EFE, August 3, 4, 7, 2001)

MACEDONIA

Parties sign peace agreement: Ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political parties signed an internationally negotiated peace agreement August 13 that legitimizes the Albanian language, and allows for an increase of ethnic Albanians in local police forces. A spokesperson for the ethnic Albanian rebel group, the National Liberation Army (NLA), stated that, "the signature of the peace accord represents a victory against Macedonian repression." The NLA has agreed to decide on the issue of voluntary disarmament by August 28. NATO troops would be deployed should disarmament of the rebels be agreed upon. The agreement was signed after seven weeks of negotiations between the political parties. Government and NLA troops have been fighting since February, causing more than 50,000 people to take refuge in neighboring Kosovo and Serbia. The NLA has stated that they are fighting for greater rights for ethnic Albanians, which constitute approximately 1/3 of the total population of Macedonia. (BBC, August 8, 13; CNN, The New York Times, August 8, 2001)

NEPAL

Government releases Maoists: Eight Maoist rebels held in custody under the Public Security Act were released August 8. The release was granted in order to create an atmosphere for talks between the government and Maoist rebels. Prime Minister Deuba has been given mandate by the ruling Nepali Congress to begin a dialogue with the Maoists. Approximately 273 rebels have continued to be held in custody on other charges. The Public Security Act was put into effect during the week of June 23 and gave officials the power to curb strikes and other types of protests. More than 1,800

people have been killed since 1996 when the Maoist rebels began “The People’s War” to overthrow Nepal’s constitutional monarchy. (NepalNews.com, June 23, August 8, 2001)