



Peace & Justice Update
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The countries for the Peace and 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 peacebuilding that pertain to gender and human rights.

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.

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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AP	=	Associated Press (www.ap.org)
AFP	=	Agence France Presse (www.afp.com)
AllAfrica	=	AllAfrica Global Media (www.allAfrica.com)
Amnesty International	=	Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org)
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk)
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports (www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/)
CDC News	=	Center for Disease Control News (www.thebody.com)
CNN	=	Cable News Network (www.cnn.com)
CPJ	=	Committee to Protect Journalists (www.cpj.org)
CSW	=	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/index.html)
DPA	=	Deutsche Presse-Agentur (www.dpa.com)
FPIF	=	Foreign Policy In Focus (www.fpif.org)
FT	=	Financial Times (www.ft.com)
GlobalSecurity	=	GlobalSecurity (www.globalsecurity.org)
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network (http://www.guardian.co.uk/)
Handicap International	=	Handicap International (www.handicap-international.org.uk)
HRW News	=	Human Rights Watch News (www.hrw.org)
ICG	=	International Crisis Group (www.crisisweb.org)
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org) (UN Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs Information Network: (www.unog.ch))
IWPR	=	Institute for War and Peace Reporting (www.iwpr.net)
Kantipur Online	=	Kantipur Online (www.kantipuronline.com .)
NCN	=	New Congo Net (www.marekinc.com/NCN.html)
PANA	=	Pan African News Agency (www.panapress.com)
ReliefWeb	=	ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf)
RSF	=	Reporters Sans Frontieres (www.rsf.org).
TASS	=	ITAR-TASS News Agency (www.itar-tass.com/english/)
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage (www.un.org)
UPI	=	United Press International (www.upi.com)
VOA	=	Voice of America (www.voanews.com)
WP	=	Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com)
WWP	=	Women Waging Peace (www.womenwagingpeace.net)
Xinhua	=	Xinhua News Agency (www.xinhuanet.com/english/index.htm)

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SERBIA

Prime Minister seeks domestic war crimes trials: Serbia's new Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica announced March 2 that his government would seek to have suspected war criminals tried before domestic courts rather than at the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague. Kostunica also announced that he would request that Serbians convicted by the tribunal be able to serve their sentences in Serbia. His announcement was an attempt to build a coalition between his Democratic Party of Serbia, which gained power in February 2004, and the Socialist Party of former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. A senior Socialist official said March 2 that his party would immediately withdraw support from Kostunica if more Serbs were extradited to the tribunal. In lieu of the tribunal, the prime minister called for a vaguely outlined program of "two-way cooperation" with The Hague, despite the UN's insistence that only lower or mid-level war crimes cases be tried before local courts. (WP, March 2, 2004)

GENDER AND PEACE

UN Commission on Status of Women holds 48th session: The UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) began its 48th session March 1 at the UN Headquarters in New York City. The Commission planned to address two primary issues throughout the conference: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality and women's equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building. In addition, the Commission intended to follow-up on past UN initiatives regarding gender equality, including the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, which called for recognition of gender equality as a human right. The Commission was also to review Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which called for increased participation of women in peace processes. CSW was established by the Economic and Social Council in 1946 to help facilitate the promotion of women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields. (CSW, March 1, 2004)

Ashcroft reviews political asylum case: Concerned that U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft had recently promoted more restrictive asylum guidelines, immigration activists and rights groups submitted legal briefs February 18 asking Ashcroft to uphold a policy offering domestic abuse victims political asylum in the U.S. At the forefront of this debate was a Guatemalan woman, Rodi Alvarado, who allegedly suffered frequent beatings by her husband for more than a decade before escaping to San Francisco in 1995. She contended that if she returned to Guatemala, her husband, a soldier in the Guatemalan army, would harm her. In addition, she claimed that the Guatemalan authorities were either unwilling or unable to provide her with protection. Ms. Alvarado was initially granted asylum on the grounds she belonged to a persecuted social group, but the Board of Immigration Appeals reversed that judgment in 1999. Under U.S. law, refugees can be granted asylum only if it is established that upon their return home, they would be persecuted due to issues of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or

membership in a particular social group. Domestic violence prevention advocates have attempted to protect battered women as members of the last category, and rights groups have considered the offer of asylum to women based on gender-related abuse to be an increasingly important issue in international refugee law. The topic first gained prominence in 1985 when the UN High Commission for Refugees issued an opinion stating that women who faced abuse from societal customs such as honor killings or beatings should comprise a special group for asylum purposes. (FPIF, February 20, 2004)

THE GREAT LAKES

RWANDA

Court issues death sentence to five suspects: A Rwandan court sentenced five people to death February 27 over the killing of Charles Rutinduka, a genocide survivor who was to testify in the Gacaca justice system. Rutinduka was killed November 26, 2003 in Kaduha where several other genocide survivors were murdered. One of the five defendants was Celestin Akimana, who plotted the murder of Rutinduka. Akimana, who was found guilty of participating in the 1994 genocide, feared that Rutinduka would testify against him during Gacaca proceedings. The Gacaca justice system was based on traditional village courts where offenders were judged by elders at the village level. It aimed to promote reconciliation of all ethnic communities in the country and was introduced in 2001 to expedite trials for an estimated 85,000 suspects held responsible for the 1994 genocide. (IRIN, March 1, 2004)

UGANDA

Donors deny hampering efforts to fight rebellion: On February 27, major donors including the U.S. rejected the assertion that donors' restrictions on defense expenditures had impeded the Ugandan army's capability to fight rebels in northern Uganda. In a press release, donor countries highlighted that in 2003 they agreed to an increase in defense spending that was related to combating the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). This statement was made in response to President Museveni's comment February 24 that the war against the LRA continued in part because donor countries placed too many restrictions on government defense spending. Nearly half of Uganda's budget has been funded by foreign sources. In the past, some donors had insisted that defense expenditures should be kept to a minimum. (IRIN, February 27, 2004)

Protesters killed during march against LRA: At least one man was killed February 25 during a demonstration against the LRA's killing of more than 200 internally displaced person. The man who was killed came from the Acholi tribe from which most of the LRA's senior commanders were drawn. Joe Wanch, Radio Wa's news editor, said that violence during the demonstration was a reflection of the anger the people of Lang'o felt against the LRA, "an Acholi group." There were also reports that some protesters from the Lang'o tribes assaulted Acholis, and burned several houses belonging to them. Violence did not cease until police opened fire to disperse the demonstrators. On

February 22 approximately 300 LRA rebels dressed like regular Ugandan army soldiers attacked the Barlonyo camp near Lira, and overpowered the local militia posted there to protect it. The rebels' attack left as many as 257 people dead, many of whom were Lang'o. ([IRIN](#), February 25, 26, 2004).

HORN OF AFRICA

SOMALIA

Security Council supports talks: The UN Security Council expressed support for the Somali peace talks February 24 after several faction leaders accused conference organizers of mismanaging and violating the rules of procedure at the National Reconciliation Conference. The conference, held under auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), achieved plenary endorsement February 23 of the peace agreement signed by Somalia's warlords and the Transitional National Government. Despite the endorsement, several faction leaders demanded that the conference be reopened due to mismanagement and absence of IGAD member states. Faction members included the Puntland Administration, civil society organizations, and the Somali Reconciliation and Reconstruction Council (SRRC). Six leaders of the SRRC had called for a postponement of the peace talks February 23 after accusing IGAD members of bias. IGAD sources denied the accusations and gained support of the UN Security Council to begin the third and final stage of the peace process. This stage was expected to select members of parliament and establish a future Somali interim government. ([IRIN](#), February 25, 26; [ReliefWeb](#), February 25, 2004)

SUDAN

Parties extend cease-fire: The Sudanese government and Sudan's main rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), agreed to extend a cease-fire until the end of March. An agreement for a cessation of hostilities first signed October 2002 was extended several times. The February 28 extension stipulated that the cease-fire would last until March 31, and was expected to broker a final peace deal to end the civil war in Sudan. Sources reported that progress on wealth-sharing and security arrangements to operate during a proposed six-year interim period had been made, but issues of power-sharing and regional disputes remained deadlocked. The transitional period was to give autonomy to southern Sudan for six years before holding a referendum to discuss a future for southern independence. Approximately two million people have been killed, and an additional four million civilians displaced in the 20-year civil war. ([IRIN](#), March 1; [Xinhua](#), February 29, 2004)

Militias attack UN aid workers: Eight UN aid workers and non-governmental staff were attacked in southern Sudan February 20 by unidentified paramilitary forces. Sources reported that the attacks deliberately targeted relief workers in the town of Nimmim, where an emergency response team had been operating for three days delivering food and other aid. Members of the humanitarian operation included a UN security officer; an official of the SPLM/A relief wing; and Sudanese citizens and international staff of the

UN Children's Fund, the UN World Food Programme, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Vision International. The attacks were directed specifically at the relief operation enclosure, but no relief workers were injured. The 20-minute attack suspended humanitarian activities for 30,000 civilians in the area now considered off-limits to aid workers of the Operation Lifeline Sudan consortium, made up of UN and NGO agencies. Prior to the attack, humanitarian operations in southern Sudan restarted following progress in peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A, which began with the July 2002 Machakos Protocol, aimed at ending Sudan's civil war. ([IRIN](#), [ReliefWeb](#), February 27, 2004)

Fighting erupts between SPLM/A and Ugandan rebel group: SPLM/A forces retaliated against Uganda's main opposition group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), March 2, after LRA forces ambushed SPLM/A enclosures near the town of Juba in southern Sudan. Sources reported that LRA rebels killed civilians, took approximately 3,000 cattle from the region, and attacked SPLM/A forces between February 24 and 28. An LRA spokesperson claimed that the retaliation attacks forced the LRA militia to retreat into hillsides on the Sudan-Uganda border. Since the government of Sudan reduced aid for the LRA in 2001, the Ugandan rebel group has retaliated by attacking, looting, and displacing more than 200,000 Sudanese refugees. ([AllAfrica](#), February 18, March 3; [IRIN](#), March 3, 2004)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

U.S. abandons landmine ban: The U.S. reversed its 10-year-old policy on elimination of all antipersonnel landmines February 27. The new policy was to allow the use of "smart" mines that contained self-destruct mechanisms designed to blow up after a period of time. Human Rights Watch called the new policy "disappointing" and "a gigantic step backward for the United States." Handicap International, the co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize winner, denounced the new landmine policy. The original ban, which was initiated by the U.S. in 1994, became official in 1997 as the Treaty to Ban Landmines. The Treaty prohibited the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of all antipersonnel mines and was signed and ratified by 150 countries. ([Handicap International](#), March 1; [HRW News](#), February 27, 2004)

Detained Malaysians launch hunger strike: Sixteen detainees held under Malaysia's Internal Security Act (ISA) launched a hunger strike March 1 to protest their two-year imprisonment, during which they have been held without any formal charges or adequate judiciary review. Human Rights Watch (HRW) demanded that the Malaysian government allow independent organizations to monitor the well-being of the group. The Malaysian government claimed that the 16 detainees were members of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia that aimed to establish an Islamic State in the country. The hunger strike was the detainees' latest tactic to protest their continued detention. ([HRW News](#), March 2, 2004)

NEPAL

U.S. officials meet with RNA: American security officials met with the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) at their Mid-Western Division Headquarters in Nepalgunj March 1. An RNA source said that the undisclosed meeting, which lasted four hours, focused on the security situation created by the on-going Maoist insurgency. The source added that the U.S. officials were considering providing more assistance to the government in their fight against the insurgents. A February 3 report by Foreign Policy In Focus claimed that the recent influx of U.S. military aid was partially responsible for the increase in civilian deaths. The U.S. previously provided \$17 million in military assistance to the government. The Maoists opposed U.S. presence in Nepal and considered the aid an interference in the country's internal affairs. Nepalese officials declined to make comments on the nature of U.S. support. (FPIF, February 3; Kantipur Online, March 2, 2004)