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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](http://www.hrw.org) or [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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## **UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS**

AP	=	Associated Press ( <a href="http://www.ap.org">www.ap.org</a> )
AFP	=	Agence France Presse ( <a href="http://www.afp.com">www.afp.com</a> )
AllAfrica	=	AllAfrica Global Media ( <a href="http://www.allAfrica.com">www.allAfrica.com</a> )
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation ( <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk">http://news.bbc.co.uk</a> )
CNN	=	Cable News Network ( <a href="http://www.cnn.com">www.cnn.com</a> )
DPA	=	Deutsche Presse-Agentur ( <a href="http://www.dpa.com">www.dpa.com</a> )
HRW News	=	Human Rights Watch News ( <a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a> )
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network ( <a href="http://www.irinnews.org">www.irinnews.org</a> ) (UN Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs Information Network: <a href="http://www.unog.ch">www.unog.ch</a> )
NCN	=	New Congo Net ( <a href="http://www.marekinc.com/NCN.html">www.marekinc.com/NCN.html</a> )
PANA	=	Pan African News Agency ( <a href="http://www.panapress.com">www.panapress.com</a> )
UPI	=	United Press International ( <a href="http://www.upi.com">www.upi.com</a> )
VOA	=	Voice of America ( <a href="http://www.voanews.com">www.voanews.com</a> )
Xinhua	=	Xinhua News Agency ( <a href="http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/index.htm">www.xinhuanet.com/english/index.htm</a> )

## **CHECHNYA**

Low intensity fighting continues: Four Russian soldiers died and three others were wounded March 27 when Chechen rebels blew up a federal forces infantry vehicle. Special units of Russian federal forces destroyed six rebel bases March 27 in the Vedeno and Nozhay-Yurt districts. During the operation, four arms caches were discovered and three rebels were killed. The Russian military commandant's office said that local Chechens provided considerable assistance to federal forces in locating the rebel groups and arms caches that included a machine gun, a sniper's rifle, eight Mukha grenade launchers, and a large number of assault rifle cartridges. Rebels were also responsible for blowing up nine cars and armored vehicles the week of March 24. Military engineers who specialized in laying, detecting, and disarming mines defused more than 100 explosive devices along the main Chechen railroad near Khankala. Russian forces entered Chechnya in 1999 after Chechen rebels were accused of several apartment bombings in Moscow. (AP, March 29; BBC, March 28, 31, 2003)

Administrator confirms candidacy: Pro-Russian Chief Administrator of Chechnya Akhmad Kadyrov confirmed March 26 that he will run for president in the elections expected to take place in December 2003. Kadyrov, who has been called a puppet and a traitor by Chechen separatist rebels, called on the international community to disavow elected President Aslan Maskhadov after the March 23 referendum that approved a new pro-Russian constitution. Maskhadov served in the Chechen military and was prime minister in the Chechen coalition government from October 1996 until January 1997. Kadyrov was appointed June 12, 2000 by the Russian government as the head of the interim Chechen administration, but did not have popular support. (AFP, March 28, 2003)

## **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)**

Representatives sign peace deal: Delegates of the government and rebel groups signed a peace deal April 2 in Sun City, South Africa aimed at ending the four-year conflict. The agreement included a new constitution and a power-sharing structure, that would allow President Joseph Kabila to retain his position with four vice-presidents representing parties to the conflict for a two-year period. The vice-presidents would include one representative of the current government and one from the political opposition, as well as one representative of the two main rebel groups, the Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD). It was agreed that a neutral international military force should be present to ensure the security of the transitional government and its members, and that the national army should be an integration of the members of the MLC and RCD rebel groups. Leaders from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe witnessed the signing of the agreement. The conflict in the DRC that has resulted in approximately 3 million deaths began in August 1998 when President Laurent Désiré Kabila's main sponsors, Rwanda and Uganda, turned against him and began supporting an anti-government rebellion, which Kabila countered with the assistance of troops supported by Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. (BBC, April 2; BuaNews, April 1, 2; IRIN, April 1, 2003)

UPC members defect: Approximately 425 soldiers of the Union of Patriots Congolese (UPC), backed by Rwanda and led by Thomas Lubanga, defected March 26 and declared

their allegiance to Uganda. According to former UPC members the grounds for the desertion were that Lubanga was misleading the group by refusing to enter the peace process in the northeastern region of Ituri. The UPC was the only group that refused to sign the Ituri Cessation of Hostilities Agreement March 18. Parties from different communities, militia groups, foreign governments, and ethnic groups have fought for control of the resource-rich Ituri region, it had been an area that experienced violence and devastation throughout the four-year conflict in the DRC. (AFP, March 25; IRIN, New Vision, March 26, 2003)

### **ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA**

Boundary commission rejects Ethiopia's claim: The independent Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) rejected calls March 21 by Ethiopia for changes to the contested border with Eritrea. In a report issued March 21 the EEBC declared the village of Badme to be part of Eritrean territory despite Ethiopia's insistence that Badme was a part of Ethiopia. It described the evidence put forward by Ethiopia as inadequate to justify any alteration in the EEBC's April 2002 border decision. Ethiopia had said March 21 that it would not abide by the border ruling unless changes to the border, such as shifting Ethiopia's border north to include Badme, were made north. Eritrea and Ethiopia signed the Algiers peace accord in December 2000 to end the two-year border war that left an estimated 80,000 people dead. (AllAfrica, March 28, 2003)

### **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS**

Court rejects compensation to sex slaves: Japan's Supreme Court rejected March 25 compensation claims set forth by ten South Korean women who were used as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II. In 1992, two former sex slaves and two former forced laborers filed a lawsuit demanding apologies and reparations. In 1998, the district court in Yamaguchi ruled that the Japanese government was responsible for failing to enact a law to compensate those used as "comfort women" for frontline Japanese soldiers. The court also ruled that there had been continual violations of basic human rights, and ordered the government to pay each plaintiff the equivalent of \$2,500. This ruling was overturned in 2001 by the Hiroshima high court, making the Supreme Court the last opportunity for these plaintiffs to receive compensation. More than 50 damages suits have been filed, yet have been repeatedly rejected by Japanese courts on two grounds: the 20-year period for demanding compensation has passed, and international treaties provide for reparations toward states and not individuals. Conversely, the Japanese government has apologized and set up a fund (no longer extant) for private donations. During 1937 and 1940, an estimated 200,000 women from countries such as China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Korea were used as military prostitutes. (AFP, Japan Economic Newswire, March 25; Sydney Morning Herald, March 27, 2003)

China releases Tibetan nun: China's longest-serving female political prisoner and Tibetan nun, Ngawang Sangdrol, was granted medical parole March 28 by the government of China. Currently 25 years old, Sangdrol was arrested 12 years ago at the age of 13 and was expected to be released in 2011. According to Agence France Presse (AFP), the release of the very committed and very vocal Sangdrol could be an indication

of change in Chinese governmental policy and a willingness to engage in additional dialogue on the status of Tibet. The nun's release, issued by chairman of China's Communist Party and newly named president as of this March, Hu Jintao, was the administration's first positive human rights gesture. Since 1951, China has ruled Tibet, the historical region of central Asia between the Himalaya and Kunlun mountains. (AFP, March 29; New York Times, March 30, 2003)

## **MACEDONIA**

EU forces replace NATO forces: An EU peacekeeping force March 31 replaced North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces deployed in Macedonia. The EU force, composed of approximately 350 soldiers and led by French General Pierre Maral, has been charged with the duties of ensuring peace by implementing the 2001 Ohrid Agreement, and carrying out peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. According to Macedonian Foreign Minister Ilinka Mitreva, EU forces would stay in Macedonia for six months after which time Macedonia should no longer need assistance from foreign military forces. NATO troops were deployed in September 2001 to manage the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. The Ohrid Agreement was a peace deal between the Macedonian government and ethnic Albanian rebels that ended the seven-month conflict, which began when the National Liberation Army took up arms against the government in February 2001 to fight for the rights of the ethnic Albanian minority. (AFP, AFX News, BBC, DPA, March 26; Financial Times, March 25, 2003)

## **NEPAL**

Top Maoist leader reemerges: Chief rebel negotiator Dr. Baburam Bhattarai appeared for the first time publicly March 29 at the Birendra International Convention Center after seven years in hiding. Along with Bhattarai, four other senior colleagues including Ram Bahadur Thapa, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deb Gurung, and Matrika Prasad Yadav emerged. Exactly two months after the declared ceasefire between the government and Maoists, Bhattarai vowed to attempt a peaceful resolution with the government to end the insurgency. He announced that formal peace talks would be held by April 11, however he believed the government had not yet created an atmosphere conducive to productive discussion. According to Bhattarai, government troops have harassed rebel supporters, prevented them from holding peaceful meetings, and have delayed the release of rebel supporters in custody, a longstanding request by Maoists in order to allow the process to continue. Since February 1996 approximately 8,000 people have died from an insurgency by Maoist rebels wishing to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and establish a "people's republic." (BBC, Times of India, March 30; New Zealand Herald, March 31, 2003)

Bhattarai meets political officials: Chief rebel negotiator Dr. Baburam Bhattarai met with president of the Nepali Congress (NC), Girija Prasad Koirala March 30, at Dhumbarai in the capital to gain support for the Maoist's desire for a roundtable conference, an all-party interim government, and a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. Bhattarai assured Koirala that the Maoists did not have any secret agreement with the government, and clarified that the Maoists did not support King Gyanendra's governmental change of October 4, 2002. Bhattarai also met with prime minister

Lokendra Bahadur Chand March 31. Chand stated preliminary “goodwill” talks could start as soon as April 4. Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal also discussed the proposed peace talks with Bhattarai. During their closed-door consultation, both leaders conversed about King Gyanendra’s October 4 dismissal of the elected prime minister and his assuming sovereign and executive authority. Nepal and Bhattarai agreed to investigate the alleged Maoist killings of approximately 100 CPN-UML leaders. This was the first time Bhattarai had met with public officials since he went into hiding in 1996. ([AFP](#), [BBC](#), [Nepalnews.com](#), March 31, 2003)

Goodwill talks to be held: Minister for Housing and Physical Planning and Works, and chief government negotiator Narayan Singh Pun, stated March 30 that “goodwill talks” with the Maoists’ negotiating team would be held April 3. According to Pun were rescheduled from April due to the busy schedule of the Maoists. The Maoists, however, have not yet publicly confirmed any intention to attend the talks. The Maoists have demanded the release of five Central Committee members and the withdrawal of indictments against Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, before they would agree to participate in the talks. The “goodwill talks” were to be a prerequisite for future formal peace negotiations to be held in Pokhara west of the Kathmandu Valley. ([BBC](#), March 31; [Financial Times](#), March 30; [Xinhua](#), March 29, 2003)

## **PHILIPPINES**

Government, MILF resume peace talks: The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and government negotiators resumed talks March 27 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The talks were aimed towards ending current hostilities between the MILF and the government. A ceasefire was signed in 2001 despite the sporadic violence between the MILF and the government that has continued in the southern region of Mindanao. Hostilities have escalated since February 2003 when government troops launched an offensive in Mindanao and captured the MILF’s main stronghold in Pikit. The MILF has insisted that the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an organization of 57 Muslim states that have combined their efforts to safeguard the interests of Muslims worldwide be a part of any new mechanism to monitor peace in Mindanao, but the government has yet to agree to this request. Renewed hostilities began in Mindanao February 8 and have left more than 200 people dead and displaced approximately 100,000. Peace talks initially began in January 1997 but were repeatedly delayed by hostilities between the two groups. The MILF launched an offensive against the government in 1978 in order to create an independent Muslim state. ([BBC](#), [South China Morning Post](#), March 27; [Manila Times](#), March 31; [Xinhua News](#), March 25, 2003)

MILF attacks continue: MILF rebels ambushed a food truck and killed two civilians March 25, and approximately 10 people were killed March 26 when MILF rebels attacked the predominately Christian town of M’Lang. Five civilians were killed in the initial attack, and five rebels were killed in the battle that ensued between soldiers and rebels. Civilians in the region expressed outraged by the recent attacks on civilians and claimed that MILF leaders assured them that civilians would not be harmed in the fight against the government. MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu blamed the government capture

of MILF stronghold, in Pikit, in February for the continued fighting in Mindanao, and claimed all recent attacks were a form of retaliation against the government. (BBC, March 26, 27; Xinhua News, March 25, 2003)

NPA attacks persist: Members of the Communist rebel group New People's Army (NPA) attacked and killed a policeman and a farmer March 25 in the northern region of Luzon. The victims were ambushed by a group of approximately 30 NPA members while they were purchasing gasoline for military forces stationed in the area. In another encounter in Bulacan, located in the central region of the Philippines, one rebel was killed March 29 in a battle between government forces and the NPA. The rebels allegedly fired upon a government battalion in an attack believed to be a part of a celebration of the NPA's 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The government also discovered and gained control of an NPA marijuana plantation in the central city of Porac. The NPA has been fighting against the government since the late 1960s making the movement one of the longest running leftist insurgencies in Asia. (BBC, March 27; Manila Times, March 30)