



Peace & Justice Update
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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

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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)
AP	=	Associated Press (www.ap.org)
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk)
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports (www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/)
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 News (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.ictr.org)
Independent	=	The Independent (www.independent.co.uk)
IPS	=	Inter Press Agency (www.ipsnew.net)
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
Kansas City Infozine	=	Kansas City Infozine (www.infozine.com)
Kathmandu Post	=	The Kathmandu Post (www.nepalnews.com.np)
La Hora	=	La Hora (www.lahora.com)
Prensa Libre	=	La Prensa Libre (www.prensalibre.com)
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com)
Monitor	=	The Monitor (www.monitor.co.ug)
MONUC	=	MONUC (www.monuc.org)
Nepal News	=	Nepal News.Com (www.nepalnews.com)
Nepali Times	=	Nepali Times (www.nepalitimes.com)
New Vision	=	The New Vision (www.newvision.co.ug/index.php)
NYT	=	The New York Times (www.nytimes.com)
PANA	=	Panafrican News Agency (www.allafrica.com)
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk)
Reuters	=	Reuters (www.reuters.com)
Real Cities	=	Real Cities (www.realcities.com)
SMH	=	Sydney Morning Herald (www.smh.com)
Terra	=	Terra (www.terra.com)
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage (www.un.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/index.htm)
WP	=	Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com)

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BURUNDI

Nation supports new constitution: Voters in Burundi approved a new power-sharing constitution February 28, designed to end 11 years of ethnic conflict between the dominant Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority. Tutsis, who constitute 14 percent of the population, were to have 40 percent of the seats in the national assembly, with Hutus to have the remaining 60 percent. The army and the police force were to be comprised equally of Hutus and Tutsis. Another key feature of the new constitution was the requirement of 30 percent women's representation in all government institutions. Election officials said 88 percent of the 3 million registered voters had gone to the polls and approximately 90 percent had voted in favor of the new constitution. Despite the high "yes" vote, some Tutsi parties had advocated a "no" vote, claiming the new constitution was exclusive and dictatorial. However, Charles Ndayizaga, the coordinator of the Centre for the Alert and Prevention of Conflict, said that a "no" vote would have had no impact on Burundi's peace process and even the Tutsi parties that called for the "no" vote knew the "yes" vote would win since they had lost the struggle for the amendment of the constitution a long time ago. This was the first time Burundians voted since 1993, when they elected a Hutu, Melchior Ndadaye, for president. Shortly thereafter he was assassinated and a civil war between Hutus and Tutsis broke out. The war lasted for 11 years and killed approximately 300,000 people. The constitutional referendum, the result of peace accords signed in Tanzania in 2000, paves the way for new parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2005. (BBC, February 28, March 1; IRIN, March 1, 2005)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Militia kill nine UN peacekeepers: Twenty Bangladeshi peacekeepers and their UN civilian national staff interpreter were ambushed by militia west of Kafe, in the northeastern district of Ituri, February 25. Nine peacekeepers were killed in the attack, the worst against the UN mission in the DRC (MONUC) since its arrival in 1999. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the DRC peacekeeping mission was not to be deterred by the attack, but was to continue its work in the region. However, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) had suspended aid to thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) following the killings. OCHA said the NGOs' security concerns and consequent aid suspension had left the IDPs without food and drinking water and that approximately 65,000 people were directly affected. But as MONUC's work continued Annan also called on the DRC government to help the UN track down the militia. The DRC defense minister, Adolphe Onusumba, visited Bangladeshi troops in the region March 1 and said "never again will this happen to you. We will arrest everybody involved with what happened." Onusumba also promised that the DRC army was to work more closely with MONUC to stop ethnic based violence in Ituri. On February 28 an international body monitoring the introduction of democracy in the DRC, known by its French acronym CIAT, demanded the immediate arrest of six men it said were behind the murder of the nine UN peacekeepers. The six men were part of two different militia groups, the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI) and the Union of

Congolese Patriots (UPC), and included Floribert Ndjabu, leader of the FNI, former FNI military chief Goda Sukpa, the FNI's present military leader Etienne Lona, UPC chairman Thomas Lubanga, and UPC military chief Bosco Tnaganda. The nine killed were part of a group of 15,000 peacekeepers from 100 countries. This is the largest peacekeeping mission in the world, and is overseeing the transition toward peace in the DRC, where a 1998-2002 war launched by foreign-backed rebels involved armies from seven African nations and killed an estimated 4 million people. Although the 2002 peace agreement has quelled most of the conflicts in the DRC, fighting between the Hema and Lendu tribes in Ituri continues. (AllAfrica, February 25, 28; AP, February 25; CNN, February 27, March 1; MONUC, February 28, March 1; NYT, February 26, 2005)

GENDER AND PEACE

Annan says empowering women the best instrument for development: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan opened the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women February 28, asserting the importance of women in nations' achieving higher levels of social and economic development. The purpose of the session was to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and current challenges and strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls. The 49th Commission, also known as Beijing+10, celebrated the 10th anniversary of the 1995 Beijing conference, which reasserted the need for governments to end discrimination in health care, politics, employment, and many other areas. The Beijing conference also broke new ground on issues such as marriage and reproductive rights, with the recognition of reproductive rights as human rights and the right for marriage to be based on consent, equality, and dignity. However, interpretations by the U.S. of the Beijing Platform for Action's (PFA) stance on reproductive and sexual rights created controversy around the conference. The U.S. declared that the PFA should not be interpreted as a guarantee to the right to abortion. Adrienne Germaine, President of the International Women's Health Coalition, considered the U.S. position very "unilateral" and stated that the U.S. "threw down the gauntlet." The 49th Commission was expected to continue until March 11. (AllAfrica, March 1; Guardian, March 1; VOA, February 28; Xinhua, February 28, 2005)

GUATEMALA

Government collaborates with UNICEF program for women and Children: The government of Guatemala has signed to an agreement with UNICEF for the realization of the Millenium Development Goals, which call for reducing worldwide hunger and poverty fifty percent by 2015. According to UN statistics, 80 percent of Guatemalans live in poverty, and 49 percent out a population of 11.2 million Guatemalans are under 18 years old. The agreement focused on guaranteeing food security and combating chronic malnutrition of youth and women, and proposed programs to improve the financing of elementary schools, reduce the spread of AIDS, and stop infant mortality. UNICEF has agreed to give 22 million dollars to finance the programs. The Guatemalan government

through the economic planning ministry has agreed to contribute an unspecified amount. (Terra, February 25; Siglo XXI, February 25, 2005)

Death penalty faces criticism: The Presidential Commission of Human Rights (Copredek) and the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) proposed to have three judges from the latter decide the fate of 37 convicted criminals facing the death penalty. The decision whether to carry out the executions had been paralyzed as the outcome could change the Guatemalan government policy on the death penalty. After Copredek and the CSJ were to come to an agreement, Congress was to have to approve the law in order for it to become effective. At this time the government has complete authority over whether to apply capital punishment. Guatemala and Cuba are the only nations in Latin America to continue to use the death penalty. As crime has increased, both the executive branch and a large majority of Guatemalans have come to support the death penalty. (Prensa Libre, February 28; La Prensa, March 1, 2005)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

War victims sue Rumsfeld: Four Iraqi and four Afghan citizens filed lawsuits March 1 against U.S. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, alleging he had authorized torture tactics. The lawsuit was filed at an Illinois court where the lawyers believe Rumsfeld holds assets. Lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union and the group Human Rights First organized the case in an attempt to hold an American official responsible for the alleged abuse of captives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The lawyers hope to use the Alien Tort Claims Act which has been used in the past by foreigners to prosecute torturers in foreign countries. The plaintiffs claim that not only did Rumsfeld authorize the tactics in 2002, but also that he ignored complaints about torture from the likes of the Red Cross and the FBI. The plaintiffs seek monetary damages and a declaration that Rumsfeld acted unconstitutionally. Similar lawsuits were filed in three other states. (Real Cities, March 1; LA Times, March 2, 2005)

U.S. State Department reports on human rights: February 28 marked the release of the U.S. State Department's annual report on human rights. The report, mandated by Congress since 1976, covers human rights conditions in 196 countries and forms the basis for U.S. international policy. The information is gathered from nongovernmental organizations and press agencies both local and international. The report begins with an introduction that controversially highlights specific human rights violators and commends human rights progress in other countries. The report then details human rights conditions in each of the 196 countries. Countries have often criticized the report's introduction and also its lack of coverage on US violations. This year many Asian nations such as China, North Korea, and Thailand have taken particular offense at the document, issuing statements denying the legitimacy and authority of the report. (IPS, February 28; Reuters, March 1, 2005)

U.S. ends death penalty for minors: The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in *Roper vs. Simmons* that executing a juvenile offender (defined as one under age 18) is unconstitutional and violates the Eighth Amendment banning cruel and unusual punishment. Other countries

that continue this practice are Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, 19 U.S. states allowed the practice. Thus, 70 juveniles on death row in those states will be spared. (Detroit Free Press, March 2, 2005)

NEPAL

World Bank suspends aid: The World Bank announced February 27 the suspension of a \$70 million loan package to Nepal due to “slow implementation of the agreed reform measures.” The bank asserted that Nepal had failed to fulfill three out of the four requirements necessary to continue receiving aid including strong action against willful loan defaulters, speedy reforms in governance, enactment of flexible labor laws and a review of heavily subsidized oil prices. The International Monetary Fund announced that it too will suspend Nepal’s aid. The Asian Development Bank is also reevaluating its situation in Nepal, further increasing Nepal’s economic problems. These actions come in the context of India and Britain’s decisions to stop all military aid until the restoration of multi-party democracy. (Deccan Herald, March 1; MoneyPlans, March 1, 2005)

Maoists end transportation blockade: Maoist rebels called off their nationwide blockade that protested King Gyanendra’s early February seizure of power. Maoist leader Prachanda said the blockade ended to show the Maoists’ “greater responsibility towards the public.” He also asserted the blockade was called off to create new methods to combat “the feudal authoritarian gang” ruling the country. However, an indefinite strike was planned for April 2005 if the King did not rescind power. According to BBC analysts, the Maoist blockades and strikes enjoy little popular support and instead are enforced with the threat of violence. King Gyanendra originally seized power, in his words, to “crush the Maoist terrorists” and “save Nepal’s democracy.” (BBC, February 26; Reuters, February 26, 2005)

Rebels killed in gun battle: At least 50 Maoist rebels including two women were killed in a clash with Nepali soldiers March 1. This battle was the deadliest conflict between the Maoists and the government since Gyanendra’s February takeover. The Maoists ambushed Nepalese forces that were removing a highway blockade, and then were attacked on all sides by the army, causing heavy casualties. Analysts assert that the army violence was used to force the Maoists to resume peace talks suspended in August of 2003. The violence occurred as Human Rights Watch declared that the King’s takeover created an environment for greater human rights abuses and disappearances. About 150 people have been killed since Gyanendra’s seizure of power. (BBC, March 1; Reuters, February 27, March 1, 2005)

RWANDA

New genocide trial begins: The trial of Lieutenant Colonel Tharcisse Muvunyi, former Commander of the Rwandan military school, Ecole des Sous-officiers, started February 28 at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Muvunyi had pleaded not guilty to all five counts against him, which include genocide or complicity in genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, and crimes against humanity

(rape and other inhumane acts). The trial began with the prosecution's opening statement in which the prosecutor of the ICTR, Hassan Bubacar Jallow from Gambia said, "in a period spanning late April to June 1994, the accused was part of government delegations that went from commune to commune instigating and inciting the population to massacre the Tutsi." He also claimed the acts committed by Muvunyi "were part of a wider genocidal plan and policy to exterminate Tutsis throughout Rwanda." Muvunyi was arrested in the United Kingdom February 5, 2000, and transferred to the UN detention facility in Arusha, Tanzania, eight months later. The UN Security Council set up the ICTR in 1994 to bring to trial the people responsible for the Rwandan genocide that killed more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Trials were to continue for 25 genocide suspects, while 18 other detainees awaited trial. ([AllAfrica](#), [ICTR](#), February 28, [IRIN](#), March 1, 2005)

SOMALIA

Exiled leaders receive warm welcome: President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Ghedi arrived in Somalia for a week long tour. The leaders were well received on their first trip to Somalia since their appointment. Thousands of Somalis took to the streets waving flags and placards bearing slogans such as "long live the President and Prime Minister." The purpose of the trip was to meet with various different sections of Somali society. This bottom-up approach is intended to assess the people's needs and pave the way for the return of the transitional government. However divisions within the exiled government appear to be growing. During the President and Prime Minister's visit, a group of cabinet ministers and MPs signed a statement denouncing the proposed deployment of foreign peacekeeping troops. President Yusuf and Prime Minister Ghedi have consistently expressed their belief in the need for foreign peacekeeping forces to create secure conditions for the government's return. Many of Somalia's neighbors have agreed and are ready to send troops. Yet according to one BBC journalist, without the support of the opposing ministers, there is very little prospect the deployment will go ahead. The Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which supported the talks leading to the formation of the transitional government, was due to meet March 7 to reassess the situation in Somalia. It is thought that the issue of the peacekeeping troops will be a key component in the discussions. Foreign affairs permanent secretary Julius Onen claimed that opposition will not stop the deployment. He stated, "in every process you will always find a section of society opposed to it, but we have to move on." The government of Somalia has been exiled in neighboring Kenya since its formation October 2004, since conditions within Somalia have been considered too dangerous for the government to return. Lawlessness and clan warfare have prevailed in Somalia since the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991. ([AllAfrica](#), March 2; [BBC](#), February 24, 27; [IRIN](#), February 24, 2005)

SRI LANKA

Prince Charles visits tsunami-stricken Sri Lanka: Britain's Prince Charles planned to visit Sri Lanka for the first time since 1998 to assess the damage caused by December 2004's tsunami, which killed more than 31,000 people and displaced an additional one

million in Sri Lanka alone. He met with President Chandrika Kumaratunga before going on to Australia. As of Friday February 25, 94,000 people were still living in relief centers and 407,000 were living with friends or relatives. The Prince's tour was to include the eastern coastal district of Batticaloa, sections of which the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) still control; however, British diplomatic sources asserted that it would be unlikely for Charles to see the rebels, the conflict with which has killed over 64,000 people. S. Puleedevan, Secretary General of the Tigers, was hopeful about Charles' trip. In an apparent allusion to the visit of former Presidents Bush Sr. and Clinton last week, Puleedevan said, "We need to tell [him] about the disaster that happened to the northeast. The northeast is being neglected and the foreign dignitaries have failed to visit the northeast giving wrong signals to the people." (BBC, February 27; Reuters, February 25, 2005)

Tensions increase between Tigers and government: Female rebel cadres opened fire February 24 on a Sri Lankan soldier in the no-man's land in the north, killing the soldier and wounding another. According to the LTTE, the soldier was armed with a grenade and walking towards rebel territory, breaking the shaky cease-fire that had its third anniversary last week. However, the government asserts that the soldier was unarmed and did not stray into the no-man's land. The shooting comes two days after rebel political leader S.P. Thamilselvan declared that the government was waging a secret war and that the cease-fire was at a breaking point. In addition, the Tigers blamed the government for attacks by an unidentified gunman who shot and wounded female rebel leader Kuveni as well as two other female rebels March 1. In response, the government appointed a presidential committee to inquire further into the recent attacks and increased fighting. The probe would look at any possible operating of terrorist groups in the East where the Tigers control most of the region. The violence has killed more than 60,000 on both sides of the conflict. (BBC, February 24, March 1; Reuters, February 24, March 1; Xinhua, March 1, 2005)

Government loses parliamentary majority: The Sri Lanka ruling alliance lost its majority in parliament February 25 after the ethnic Tamil party, the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) walked out leaving the country in a state of uncertainty. The CWC had 8 seats in the 225 seat assembly, and its departure left the ruling alliance with only 111 members, two seats short of a majority. The CWC said it joined the opposition because of the failure of President Kumaratunga's government to "implement certain agreements and programs." Analysts said that the CWC's withdrawal was unlikely to bring down the government. However, the government could be forced to call for general elections if the Marxist People's Liberation Front (MPLF), another political faction within the alliance, were to carry out its threat to leave the alliance. In contrast with the CWC, the MPLF disagreed with the current alliance's support for continued peace talks with the Tamils and strongly opposed proposals by the government to enter into power-sharing agreements with the Tigers. A possible MPLF departure would create greater instability in Sri Lanka, whose government has been in a violent struggle with the Tigers since 1983. (BBC, February 25, March 2; FT, February 28; Reuters, February 24; WP, February 25, 2005)

SUDAN

Government talks peace but atrocities continue: The Sudanese government has proclaimed its desire for peace in Darfur, the Western region of Sudan, with Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha telling the African Union (AU) that the government has begun to withdraw its troops. Taha confirmed that a date would soon be set for talks to commence between the government and the rebel groups. The AU, seemingly optimistic about the recent statements, has pointed to an improvement in the security situation in Darfur. However humanitarian groups working in the area have relayed a different story. Oxfam has said that security has only increased in the small areas where the AU is working, referring to such successes as “merely a drop in the ocean.” Human Rights Watch (HRW) argues that the AU is operating with an insufficient force, only capable of monitoring the larger towns and state capitals. According to these organizations, harassment, beatings, rape and murder are continuing to take place on a daily basis outside the awareness of the international community. As recently as February, government airplanes and the Janjaweed militia are reported to have attacked villages in southern Darfur, killing at least 100 people. Peter Tskirambudde of HRW stated, “The Sudanese Government talks peace at the UN, but then orders air strikes and militia raids against its own people.” Calls are being made for the UN Security Council to take action and refer the case of Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Furthermore there have been requests for a UN force to work alongside the AU to help ensure civilians’ security. However the council appears to be stalled on these issues due to conflicting ideas among its members, in particular the U.S. refusal to endorse the ICC. The attacks by the government of Sudan and its allied militias have led to the deaths of over 100,000 people. The conflict began two years ago when rebels from Darfur attacked government targets claiming their region has been marginalized and discriminated against by the Khartoum government. ([BBC](#) February 27; [HRW](#) February 28; [IRIN](#) February 28; [Oxfam](#) February 28, 2005)

UGANDA

Fresh LRA atrocities emerge as conflict recommences: Only one week since the expiration of the latest cease-fire, attacks by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) left 24 dead. In an incident reported by the Ugandan daily, New Vision, the LRA set upon 11 women in the Apac district, killing them all by “smashing their heads with hoes.” Another attack February 24 left eight women severely mutilated after the LRA sliced their lips off. The women had left an internally displaced persons camp in Kitgum district to collect water when LRA rebels surrounded them. One woman tried to resist and was shot and killed. Alongside this has been the launch of a new offensive by the Ugandan People’s Defense Force (UPDF). According to one of the Ugandan army’s spokesmen, Paddy Ankunda, the UPDF had killed nine rebels including LRA director of operations Colonel Richard Opoka. Those involved in orchestrating peace talks between the two sides have expressed their disappointment in the failure of recent talks and the resumption of violence. Chief mediator Betty Bigombe has indicated that she is still in contact with the LRA; however, it seems that the recent LRA attacks have only further strengthened the prevailing government stance that a military solution is required. UPDF

spokesman Shaban Bantariza stated, “It is useless to interpret the peace process through talks alone, the peace is arrived at by militarily eliminating those we cannot save.” Former LRA rebel Sam Kolo, who surrendered during the most recent cease-fire, believes LRA leaders Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti are responsible for the talks’ failure thus far. Kolo is of the impression that with the exception of these two, most LRA rebels now wish to surrender. The LRA has waged a 19-year war against the Ugandan government, with the stated aim of establishing a new government based on the Ten Commandments. The conflict has resulted in the death of thousands and the displacement of up to 1.6 million people. ([BBC](#), February 24; [IRIN](#), February 28; [New Vision](#), February 26, 28; [The Monitor](#), February 23, 2005)