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The countries for the Peace & Justice Updates have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute.

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ADNKI	=	ADNKI (www.adnki.com)
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)
Asian Tribune	=	Asian Tribune (www.asiantribune.com)
AP	=	Associated Press (www.ap.org)
B92	=	B92 Net (www.b92.net/eng/)
AWID	=	Association for Women's Rights in Development (www.awid.org)
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk)
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports (www.monitor.bbc.co.uk)
CBC News	=	CBC News (www.cbc.ca)
CIA	=	CIA - The World Factbook (www.cia.gov)
EU	=	European Union (www.europa.eu.int)
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network (www.guardian.co.uk)
HRW	=	Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org)
ICC	=	International Criminal Court (www.icc-cpi.int)
ICG	=	International Crisis Group (www.crisisweb.org)
IndiaTimes	=	India Times (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)
Independent	=	The Independent (www.independent.co.uk)
IPS News Agency	=	Inter Press Service News Agency (http://ipsnews.net)
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
IWPR	=	Institute for War & Peace Reporting (www.iwpr.net)
Kantipur Online	=	The Kantipur Online (www.kantipuronline.com)
Kathmandu Post	=	The Kathmandu Post (www.nepalnews.com.np)
Khaleej Times	=	Khaleej Times (www.khaleejtimes.com)
Jurist	=	The Jurist (http://jurist.law.pitt.edu)
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com)
Makfax	=	Macedonian Independent News Agency (www.makfax.com)
Monitor	=	The Monitor (www.monitor.co.ug)
Nepal News	=	Nepal News (www.nepalnews.com)
Nepali Times	=	Nepali Times (www.nepalitimes.com)
New Vision	=	New Vision (www.newvision.co.ug)
New Zealand Herald	=	The New Zealand Herald (www.nzherald.co.nz)
News24	=	News24 (www.news24.com)
NYT	=	The New York Times (www.nytimes.com)
PANA	=	Panfrican News Agency (www.panapress.com)
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam Great Britain (www.oxfam.org.uk)
Reuters	=	Reuters (www.reuters.com)
RSF	=	Reporters sans frontières (www.rsf.org)
SEAPA	=	Southeast Asian Press Alliance (www.seapabkk.org)
SERBIANNA	=	Serbianna.com (www.serbianna.com)
SMH	=	Sydney Morning Herald (www.smh.com)
ST	=	Sudan Tribune (www.sudantribune.com)
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage (www.un.org)
UNESCO	=	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (www.unesco.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)
WP	=	The Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com)
Web India	=	Web India (www.webindia123.com)

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AFGHANISTAN

Kidnapped reporter released: Daniele Mastrogiacomo, a Pakistani-born reporter for the Italian daily La Repubblica, was released March 19 after being abducted and held by Taliban militants for two weeks. Mastrogiacomo and his two Afghan companions were kidnapped March 5 in the Nad Ali district of Helmand province and accused of spying on the Taliban for British troops. Once released, Mastrogiacomo was taken to a hospital in the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, home to the Italian-led aid group Emergency. Upon his arrival, hundreds of people protested in front of the hospital demanding information about Syed Agha—Mastrogiacomo's driver—who was executed March 15 after a Taliban court found him guilty of spying. Police officials later arrested Rahamatullah Hanafi, the head of the Emergency hospital, in connection with the execution. The fate of Mastrogiacomo's translator is still unknown. The 52-year-old said that he was bound with chains and forced to walk miles in the desert before finally being released. The Taliban claimed that Mastrogiacomo was freed after the Afghan government released four insurgent leaders, including the brother of military commander Mullah Dadullah. President Hamid Karzai's spokesman refused to comment on whether any prisoners were exchanged. Helmand province, on Afghanistan's southern border with Pakistan, is considered one of the most dangerous regions in Afghanistan, due mostly to the large number of Taliban insurgents entrenched there. Coalition forces have recently launched a major operation in the area to combat the insurgents. Last year, Afghanistan saw the worst violence since U.S. and British forces ousted the Taliban from power in 2001. (Reuters, March 20; WP, March 19, 2007).

Human rights organizations demand military regulation in wake of increasing civilian deaths: One person was killed and five wounded in Kabul March 19 after a suicide car bomber attacked a three-vehicle U.S. Embassy convoy. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the explosion, which killed an Afghan teenager, and stated that the militant came from Khost province near Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. This attack occurred two miles from the U.S. airforce base at Bagram where a suicide bomber took the lives of 23 people in February. The increase in suicide bombing and civilian deaths has prompted international and Afghan rights groups to ask that U.S. and Afghan governments create a legal framework to oversee U.S. military activities in the country that would protect civilians. Fareed Hamidi, a commissioner for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), emphasized the need for a specific legal structure for allied activities and demanded that they take responsibility for their actions. Hamidi's comments came in response to two U.S.-led operations that resulted in over 20 civilian casualties. Coalition forces have responded to the accusations by blaming insurgents for attacking U.S. and allied officials in highly populated areas. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), more than 1,000 civilians have been killed or injured since January 2006. HRW has criticized coalition forces for not having taken responsibility for the killings and for failing to take any precautions to avoid future civilian deaths. Last year saw the highest increase in Taliban and insurgent attacks in Afghanistan since 2001 when a U.S. - and British-led invasion ousted the Taliban from power. (IRIN, March 18, WP, March 19, 2007).

GUATEMALA

Four more arrested for Salvadoran murders: Four alleged gang members were arrested March 20 in Jalpatagua, a town southeast of Guatemala City near the Salvadoran border, in connection with the February 19 assassinations of three Salvadoran lawmakers and their driver. Interior Minister Carlos Vielmann claimed that the murder suspects had ties to drug trafficking and had ordered rogue policemen to kidnap the diplomats and search their vehicle for drugs. Marvin Contreras, a police detective who has been linked to the assassinations, corroborated that theory saying that he was sent to provide backup for the policemen while they investigated the car claiming they were searching for a package of drugs. Prosecutor Alvaro Matus, who is leading the investigation, said evidence indicated that the car was targeted by mistake and that investigators had not found any evidence linking the

policemen to drug trafficking. Salvadoran officials have denied that the lawmakers had any ties to organized crime. A clear motive is yet to be determined. Last month, four members of the Guatemalan National Police who stood accused of the assassinations, including the head of the organized crime investigations unit, were murdered in their jail cells during a riot in Boquerón prison. The killings have exposed corruption within the Guatemalan police department and prompted President Oscar Berger to order a purging of the police force by promoting the creation of an International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. The government has already fired 1,000 officers and plans to dismiss an additional 1,000. Many people speculate that Guatemala's rogue police officers emerged as an eventual consequence of the 36-yearlong civil war that resulted in over 200,000 deaths. (WP, March 16, 2007).

Inter-American Development Bank meets in Guatemala: As finance ministers from across the Americas gathered at the International American Development Bank (IADB)'s 48th annual meeting March 19-20 in Guatemala City, the bank estimated that remittances from migrant workers would reach over \$100 billion annually by 2010, increasing by around 15 percent a year. The increase in remittances highlights the problems of unemployment and underemployment in Latin America. Donald F. Terry, general manager of the bank's concessional lending window, said that remittances kept 8 to 10 million Latin American families above the poverty line, despite the fact that recent U.S. efforts to quell illegal immigration have hindered migrant efforts to send money back to their homelands. Among other main topics of discussion were foreign debts and the use of alternative fuels. The IADB announced that it would erase the foreign debts of Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti and Guyana, reaching a total of \$4.4 billion. It would also finance several other countries, including Guatemala, to improve education, health care and other services. The IADB also announced that it would provide credits to countries that reduce their carbon emissions by promoting renewable energy. United States Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson commended the IADB's backing of alternative fuels saying that it would greatly reduce Latin American countries' oil dependence and improve their economies by providing jobs. The bank provided \$6 billion in loans last year to Latin America. Guatemala's economy is highly disproportional as the richest 20 percent receive almost two thirds of the country's income. In 2006, Guatemala ranked 118th of 177 countries on the United Nation's human development index. (NYT, March 18; WP, March 16, 19, 2007).

KOSOVO

U.N. rejects Russian calls for further negotiations and new envoy: United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, architect of a proposal for limited Kosovo autonomy, denied March 17 requests by Russia to extend the timetable for talks on the status of the Serbian province. Subsequent calls for Ahtisaari's replacement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and national security advisor Igor Ivanov have also gone unheeded. Russia issued its requests following Ahtisaari's closing of a final round of negotiations between Serbian and Albanian diplomats that failed to produce a solution. The talks, held in Vienna, were meant to facilitate compromise on Ahtisaari's proposal, which reportedly grants Kosovo the right to establish its own flag, national anthem, constitution and army, and to apply for membership in international organizations. Both Serbia and ally Russia have expressed opposition to the proposal, which they see as leading to Kosovo's full independence. Meanwhile, the Kosovar Albanian officials and the West endorse the proposal as the only way to avert further unrest and violence in Kosovo. Deadlock in the Vienna talks prompted Ahtisaari to end negotiations and refer his proposal to the U.N. Security Council, which was expected to make a final decision in late March. While permanent Security Council member Russia has not explicitly threatened to block the proposal, some observers expect it to do so, and many Serbs are counting on a Russian veto to prevent the breakaway of its treasured southern province. Kosovo holds special importance for Serbs as the cradle of Serb Orthodox civilization and the site of a legendary 1389 battle between Serbs and Ottoman Turks; it is home to both ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians, with the latter constituting over ninety percent of the population. A 1999 NATO air campaign ended a brutal conflict between Serbs and Albanians, and Kosovo has since been administered by the U.N. (WP, March 18, 19, 2007).

Leading officials comment on Kosovo plan: Former United States Ambassador Richard Holbrooke warned March 19 that further stalling of a United Nations proposal to grant Kosovo limited autonomy could result in violence in the Serbian province. Holbrooke, architect of the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnia war, stated at a meeting in Brussels that the U.N. proposal was the best possible solution to the Kosovo issue. The proposal, drafted February 6 by U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, reportedly would allow Kosovo to establish its own flag, national anthem, constitution and army, and to apply for membership in international organizations. While Kosovo's majority ethnic Albanian population has accepted the proposal, Serbia has rejected it out of concern that it would violate the rights of the province's minority ethnic Serbs. The proposal has provoked demonstrations by both Serbs and Albanians, one of which resulted in the deaths of two protestors and resignations by Kosovar and U.N. officials. Holbrooke suggested that NATO peacekeeping forces prepare for further civil unrest as the proposal moved to the U.N. Security Council for consideration. Meanwhile, Kosovo Prime Minister Agim Ceku stated that Ahtisaari planned to propose full independence for the province when he presented his proposal to the Security Council at the end of March. In a March 14 announcement to the Kosovo parliament, Ceku suggested that while Ahtisaari had not explicitly recommended independence, his proposal called for initial supervision of Kosovo to give way to full-fledged independence. Ahtisaari has not commented on Ceku's remarks, preferring to keep the proposal's contents confidential until his presentation, according to spokesman Remi Dourlot. If passed, the proposal would call for the withdrawal of U.N. administrators, who have governed Kosovo since a 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo and Belgrade ended Serb counterinsurgency operations against Albanian separatists. (WP, March 14, 19, 2007).

SOMALIA

U.N. steps up involvement, increases voice in Somalia: Eighteen members of a United Nations delegation met March 18 with Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi in the government-controlled city of Baidoa to discuss the possibility of replacing the African Union Mission on Somalia (AMISOM) with U.N. peacekeepers. The U.N.-sponsored AMISOM mission has deployed 1,700 Ugandan troops to Mogadishu to support the government and help restore stability to the capital, but its mandate ends September 2007 with no plan to replace the A.U. forces. The A.U. peacekeepers face escalating violence in the city, where insurgents have waged near-daily rocket attacks and gun battles against civilians, government officials, and Somali and Ethiopian security forces since the December 26, 2007 ouster of the Union of Islamic Courts. If authorized, the prospective U.N. mission would be the second in the country, following the 1993 second U.N. Mission on Somalia (UNOSOM II) that withdrew after the highly-publicized deaths of eighteen United States marines in a Mogadishu street battle. Meanwhile, the U.N. issued a March 16 condemnation of the recent killing of a Somali human rights activist, and drew attention to the increasing attacks on human rights workers in the country. Eric Laroche, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Somalia, censured the March 14 murder of Isse Abdi Isse, former mayor of Kismayu and founder of the Kasima Peace and Development Organization. Isse, who was shot to death at a Mogadishu hotel, is one of many human rights activists who have recently been targeted in the environment of insecurity that has plagued Somalia since the toppling of the Courts. Prior to their ouster, the Courts ruled Somalia for six months and imposed Sharia law in the country, which had been without effective government since the 1991 overthrow of President Mohamed Siad Barre. (WP, March 16, 18, 2007).

Rights groups and agencies release figures on deaths and displacements: Ongoing conflict over the past year has killed 1,700 civilians, wounded 2,000 and prompted tens of thousands to flee the violence in Mogadishu, according to various human rights organizations and agencies. The locally-based Elman Human Rights Group, which announced its findings on Somali civilian casualties in a March 11 statement, attributed the casualties to battles between warlords and the Union of Islamic Courts, which preceded the Courts' assumption of power in June 2006. Sudan Ali Ahmed, chairman of the group,

urged that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) focus on protecting human rights, reconstitute an effective judicial apparatus and take steps toward national reconciliation in the country, which has lacked a durable and effective government since 1991. Reports by U.N. humanitarian agencies, which document 40,000 displacements from Mogadishu since February 2007, similarly blame factional violence that has been directed disproportionately toward the civilian population. Frequent battles between insurgents and government forces have often been waged in Mogadishu's residential areas, killing and wounding bystanders and prompting a mass exodus from the capital. Insecurity in the country has also complicated efforts by aid agencies to deliver aid to victims of the fighting and to help improve deteriorating living standards and health conditions, which threaten to kill and displace many more. Somalia has been plagued by lawlessness since TFG and Ethiopian forces ousted the Union of Islamic Courts, which had controlled the country for the six months prior to their December 26 overthrow. The African Union has begun deployment of an intervention mission, composed of 4,000 troops from Burundi, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda, to help stabilize the country. (IRIN, March 15; WP, March 11).

SRI LANKA

Tensions heighten between the military and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels: Tensions between the military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were exacerbated March 20 after the bodies of four soldiers and eight Tamil rebels were found. Military officials reported that fighting in Sittandy, near Batticaloa, was the worst it had been in months. Military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Upali Rajapakse reported that four army bases were attacked by LTTE rebels. The Tamil Tigers have also set up mines and explosives along roads to hinder the efforts of military reinforcements; a military search operation found the bodies of eight rebels killed by their own explosives. In addition to the fighting on the ground, Sri Lanka's navy has sunk two cargo vessels suspected of carrying weapons for the LTTE. After the Sri Lankan navy fired warning shots at the vessels, the cargo crews ignored the warning and attempted to fire back, but were sunk by naval defenses. Furthermore, air force jets destroyed an LTTE naval base March 20 near the northeastern town of Mullaittivu. A senior defense official recently speculated that fighting between the military and rebels could last for another two to three years, effectively ending a 2002 ceasefire to the civil war. (BBC, March 18, 20, 21, 2007).

United Nations issues food crisis warning: The World Food Program (WFP) has issued a warning that there is a shortage of resources to feed displaced people in eastern Sri Lanka due to an influx of 95,000 newly internally displaced people (IDPs) in the past week, bringing total IDPs to an estimated 155,000. WFP spokesperson Simon Pluess stated that stocks were falling so rapidly that food supplies would run out by April. Due to these shortages, the WFP has been forced to suspend several food programs already. The eastern district of Batticaloa has housed many IDP camps that have become overcrowded and rampant with poor sanitation, disease, and lack of food as a result. Regional aid agencies have predicted a major humanitarian emergency and have encountered resistance by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in giving support to the IDPs. These agencies have asked the rebels to stop impeding access via Sri Lankan government ministries to the hundreds of thousands of dislocated people in need of aid. The food crisis warning came in the wake of escalating violence and displacement of thousands of Sri Lankans facing the brunt of a twenty four-year civil war. (BBC, March 20, 2007).

SUDAN

Al-Bashir denies government complicity in Darfur war crimes: In a television interview with NBC's Ann Curry, his first interview with a Western journalist in three years, President Omar al-Bashir reacted strongly to accusations that his government had been complicit in the ethnic cleansing that has been going on in the Darfur region since 2003. He also charged that the United States has been operating on ulterior motives in its statements against Sudan. Al-Bashir responded to the United Nations Human

Rights Council's mission on the Darfur conflict by calling it biased and inaccurate due to its reliance on false information. He attempted to refute allegations against Khartoum that ethnic cleansing and genocide were being committed in Darfur. In response to the prospect of sanctions on Sudan, al-Bashir warned that these would obstruct the peace process. Curry asked al-Bashir how Arab militias, such as the Janjaweed, could destroy thousands of villages without the support of government authority. Al-Bashir responded that the picture the U.S. has given regarding the situation in Darfur had been fabricated, and likened it to that given by the Bush Administration regarding the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In addition, al-Bashir asserted that Khartoum had a judicial system in place to try war criminals, so the assistance of the International Criminal Court had been unnecessary and unwelcome. Al-Bashir accused the U.S. of presenting a biased picture of the conflict in order to benefit from Darfur's rich oil reserves. Al-Bashir's interview shed light on the sources of the current impasse preventing an end to the violence in Darfur that began in 2003. (ST, March 20, 2007).

Darfur camps reaching capacity while attracting new economic migrants: An assessment report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that camps for internally displaced people from Darfur are reaching capacity due to an influx of people fleeing the violence in the region. Some areas of Darfur have experienced major food and water shortages. Statistics from the report show that access to aid agencies in Darfur dropped to 64 percent in January and that 70 percent of the conflict-affected population remain without reliable access to food. Aside from the arrival of those fleeing for their safety, Darfur camps have experienced an increase in economic migrants who have been seeking better living conditions. One farmer from the village of Dagok, whose crops failed this year, heard that the camps were providing food and shelter, so he left his home in search of a camp. Aid workers have worried that attracting this new kind of refugee will decrease rations for those fleeing from the violence, so the World Food Program (WFP) has produced a food targeting policy, giving rations based on greatest need. Adding to the problem of food and water shortages are the number of sheiks who have been recording names of Darfuris in order to collect food ration cards, but have been hoarding and selling the cards instead. Refugee camps continue to fill as the conflict in Darfur begun in February 2003 enters its fifth year. (IRIN; ST, March 19, 2007).

UGANDA

Kony benefits from Sudanese suspension of cooperation with the ICC: The Sudanese government decided to suspend all cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC) after the ICC named two Sudanese officials as having committed war crimes in Darfur. The suspension would affect Sudan's commitment to cooperate with the ICC in arresting Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony. On October 3, 2005, the ICC and the governments of Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a memorandum agreeing to collaborate in efforts to arrest Kony, his deputy Vincent Otti, and three other LRA commanders. Justice Minister Mohammed Ali al-Mardi stated March 20, "We have extended our cooperation with the ICC for some time, but now the situation is completely different ... It's not even a question of cooperation anymore, it's a question that [the ICC] want to try Sudanese citizens, which is absolutely nonsensical." Regional Cooperation Minister Isaac Musumba acknowledged that a suspension of cooperation between Sudan and the ICC would have "huge implications for the dynamics of the Kony case," but he did not specify what those implications would be. Southern Sudanese Vice President Riek Machar has been the chief mediator in the peace negotiations between the government of Uganda and the LRA, which began July 2006 in Juba, the southern Sudanese capital. (Monitor, March 20, 2007).

Museveni meets with lawyers: In an attempt to restore ties with legal practitioners after a March 1 siege of the High Court by security forces, President Yoweri Museveni met with hundreds of lawyers in Kampala March 18. No agenda for the conference was disclosed; presidential press secretary Tamale

Mirundi said the meeting was arranged “purely [for] interaction” purposes and that there were no set issues for discussion. Mirundi added, “People have been saying that the president doesn’t respect the judiciary, so he is meeting these people to know who is who and to tell them that the government is committed to the rule of law in the country.” Although Uganda Law Society President Oscar Kihika confirmed the March 18 closed-door meeting between Museveni and the lawyers, he did not give any details regarding their discussions, stating that to do so would be to violate the instructions given to him. Ugandan lawyers went on a three-day strike ending March 14 in solidarity with a lawyer who was severely beaten in the March 1 raid. (Monitor, March 19, 2007).

NEPAL

Political clashes kill more than 25: On March 21, violence between Maoists and the Madhesi People’s Rights Forum (MPRF) killed 25 and injured more than 30, forcing authorities to impose a curfew on the border town of Gaur, 50 miles south of Kathmandu. The MPRF has been protesting for more government jobs and seats in parliament for its people who live in the Terai, the narrow strip of land in southern Nepal that borders India, since December 2006. Government officials said the two sides had opened fire at each other, causing dozens of deaths and injuries. Local police chief Ram Kumar Khanal stated that clashes broke out between the Maoists and MPRF supporters over a meeting ground that both sides wanted to use. At least 56 people have been killed in protests organized by the Forum over the past three months. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said March 21 from OHCHR headquarters in Geneva that she was deeply shocked by the killings and “[urged] the authorities to take all necessary steps to initiate a full and impartial investigation into the killings and other violent incidents and to hold accountable anyone responsible.” Most of the victims were Maoist supporters, some of whom died of severe head injuries caused by beatings with bamboo sticks. Lena Sundh, chief of the OHCHR in Nepal called on both sides to take steps to end the violence and ensure differences were resolved peacefully. Maoists are opposed to most ethnic-based organizations, such as the MPRF, claiming that they themselves are the best guarantors of regional and ethnic rights. Under the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Maoists and the government of Nepal, thousands of former Maoist fighters and their weapons were to be confined to U.N. supervised cantonments. Although proportional representation has already been granted to the Madhesis under the interim legislature—49 percent of seats in parliament—the MPRF has said that all their demands have not yet been met and that they will continue to demonstrate until they are. (BBC, March 19, 21; Reuters, March 21, 22, 2007).

Maoist leader expresses sorrow over businessman’s abduction and beating as businesses announce indefinite strike: The business community announced an indefinite closure of all industries March 18 in reaction to a Maoist attack on a hotel owner after he refused to pay a “voluntary donation” of Rs10 million (\$140,000) to Maoist cadres. The Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) announced its strike on March 19 stating that the government had not been serious about addressing their problems. The strike was announced after a group led by the FNCCI marched to the residence of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to hand him a memorandum stating their security demands, and had their request to see him rejected. The group of irate businessmen then arrived at Durbar Marg, Kathmandu’s luxurious tourist quarter, to rally on the streets and close their shops. Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) President Binod Chaudhary said that although the CNI had tolerated repeated instances of violence and intimidation by the Maoists, the recent assault on Hotel Woodland’s owner Harilal Shrestha was the last straw. “It is pointless to continue with the business and industries when people are being taken from a central place like Durbar Marg and beaten up in such a brutal manner,” said Chaudhary. FNCCI President Chandi Raj Dhakal said that federation members could not run their businesses in the absence of security and called on the government to end Maoist intimidation. In support of the strike, Internet service providers shut down Web access for an hour. Maoist Chairman Prachanda said March 19, “We express our sorrow over the incident because [it] has happened at a time when the nation is moving ahead on the process of forming a new interim

government.” Prachanda also stated that he had already directed other members of his party to investigate the attack, and to take action against those responsible. Maoist spokesman Krishna Mahara said his party was completely against such acts, but also stated that a 10-year rebellion could not be removed “100 percent at once.” This incident came amid Maoist negotiations to take a role in forming an interim government, following a November 2006 peace agreement between the government of Nepal and the Maoists. (BBC, March 20; Kantipur, March 19, 2007).

