



JOAN B. KROC  
INSTITUTE FOR  
PEACE & JUSTICE  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Peace & Justice Update  
*March 5, 2008*  
*(Volume 18, Number 1)*

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

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 bibliographical 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.

Update subscriptions: Electronic subscriptions to the Peace & Justice Updates are free; simply send an email to [updates@san Diego.edu](mailto:updates@san Diego.edu) and include the word "subscribe" in the subject line.

*The Peace & Justice Updates are written by the Spring 2008 interns at the  
Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the  
University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies  
The interns are Andrew Chua (University of California, San Diego);  
Justine Darling (University of San Diego); and Andrea Lovano (University of San Diego).*

## SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

The Age	=	The Age ( <a href="http://www.theage.com.au">www.theage.com.au</a> )
AfricaFocus	=	AfricaFocus ( <a href="http://www.africafocus.org">www.africafocus.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> )
American Chronicle	=	American Chronicle ( <a href="http://www.americanchronicle.com">www.americanchronicle.com</a> )
Amnesty International	=	Amnesty International ( <a href="http://www.amnesty.org">www.amnesty.org</a> )
Asian Tribune	=	Asian Tribune ( <a href="http://www.asiantribune.com">www.asiantribune.com</a> )
AP	=	Associated Press ( <a href="http://www.ap.org">www.ap.org</a> )
AWID	=	Association for Women's Rights in Development ( <a href="http://www.awid.org">www.awid.org</a> )
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation ( <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk">news.bbc.co.uk</a> )
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports ( <a href="http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk">www.monitor.bbc.co.uk</a> )
CBC News	=	CBC News ( <a href="http://www.cbc.ca">www.cbc.ca</a> )
Christian Monitor	=	Christian Monitor ( <a href="http://www.christianmonitor.org">www.christianmonitor.org</a> )
CIA	=	CIA - The World Factbook ( <a href="http://www.cia.gov">www.cia.gov</a> )
Concord Times	=	The Concord Times ( <a href="http://www.concordtimesl.com">www.concordtimesl.com</a> )
Crisis Group	=	International Crisis Group ( <a href="http://www.crisisgroup.org">www.crisisgroup.org</a> )
The East African	=	The East African ( <a href="http://www.nationmedia.com/eastafrican/current">www.nationmedia.com/eastafrican/current</a> )
eKantipur	=	Kantipur Online ( <a href="http://www.kantipuronline.com">www.kantipuronline.com</a> )
eng24.kg	=	News Agency 24 ( <a href="http://eng.24.kg">http://eng.24.kg</a> )
EU	=	European Union ( <a href="http://www.europa.eu.int">www.europa.eu.int</a> )
Financial Times	=	Financial Times News ( <a href="http://www.ft.com">www.ft.com</a> )
FMM	=	Free Media Movement ( <a href="http://www.freemediasrilanka.org">www.freemediasrilanka.org</a> )
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network ( <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk">www.guardian.co.uk</a> )
The Hindu	=	The Hindu Newspaper ( <a href="http://www.hinduonnet.com">www.hinduonnet.com</a> )
HRW	=	Human Rights Watch ( <a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a> )
Herald Tribune	=	Herald Tribune ( <a href="http://www.iht.com">www.iht.com</a> )
ICC	=	International Criminal Court ( <a href="http://www.icc-cpi.int">www.icc-cpi.int</a> )
ICG	=	International Crisis Group ( <a href="http://www.crisisweb.org">www.crisisweb.org</a> )
ICTY	=	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ( <a href="http://www.un.org/icty">www.un.org/icty</a> )
IHT	=	International Herald Tribune ( <a href="http://www.iht.com">www.iht.com</a> )
Independent	=	The Independent ( <a href="http://www.independent.co.uk">www.independent.co.uk</a> )
IndiaTimes	=	India Times ( <a href="http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com">www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com</a> )
IPS News Agency	=	Inter Press Service News Agency ( <a href="http://ipsnews.net">ipsnews.net</a> )
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network ( <a href="http://www.irinnews.org">www.irinnews.org</a> )
ISN	=	International Relations and Security Network ( <a href="http://www.isn.ethz.ch/index.cfm">www.isn.ethz.ch/index.cfm</a> )
IWPR	=	Institute for War & Peace Reporting ( <a href="http://www.iwpr.net">www.iwpr.net</a> )
Kathmandu Post	=	The Kathmandu Post ( <a href="http://www.nepalnews.com.np">www.nepalnews.com.np</a> )
Jurist	=	The Jurist ( <a href="http://jurist.law.pitt.edu">jurist.law.pitt.edu</a> )
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times ( <a href="http://www.latimes.com">www.latimes.com</a> )
Monitor	=	The Monitor ( <a href="http://www.monitor.co.ug">www.monitor.co.ug</a> )
Nepal News	=	Nepal News ( <a href="http://www.nepalnews.com">www.nepalnews.com</a> )
Nepali Times	=	Nepali Times ( <a href="http://www.nepalitimes.com">www.nepalitimes.com</a> )
New Vision	=	New Vision ( <a href="http://www.newvision.co.ug">www.newvision.co.ug</a> )
News24	=	News24 ( <a href="http://www.news24.com">www.news24.com</a> )
NYT	=	The New York Times ( <a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a> )
PANA	=	Panafrican News Agency ( <a href="http://www.panapress.com">www.panapress.com</a> )
Peace Africa	=	Peace Africa ( <a href="http://www.allafrica.com/peaceafrica">www.allafrica.com/peaceafrica</a> )
PDO	=	People's Daily Online ( <a href="http://english.peopledaily.com.cn">english.peopledaily.com.cn</a> )
Prensa Latina	=	Prensa Latina, Latin America News Agency ( <a href="http://www.plenglish.com">www.plenglish.com</a> )
Prensa Libre	=	Prensa Libre ( <a href="http://www.prensalibre.com">www.prensalibre.com</a> )
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam Great Britain ( <a href="http://www.oxfam.org.uk">www.oxfam.org.uk</a> )

RadioFreeEurope	=	RadioFreeEurope, Radio Liberty ( <a href="http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007">www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007</a> )
ReliefWeb	=	Relief Web ( <a href="http://www.reliefweb.int">www.reliefweb.int</a> )
Reuters	=	Reuters ( <a href="http://www.reuters.com">www.reuters.com</a> )
RSF	=	Reporters sans frontières ( <a href="http://www.rsf.org">www.rsf.org</a> )
The Rising Nepal	=	The Rising Nepal ( <a href="http://www.gorkhapatra.org">www.gorkhapatra.org</a> )
SDUT	=	San Diego Union Tribune ( <a href="http://www.signonsandiego.com">www.signonsandiego.com</a> )
The Star	=	The Star.com ( <a href="http://www.thestar.com">www.thestar.com</a> )
Transparency Int.	=	Transparency International ( <a href="http://transparency.org">transparency.org</a> )
UNESCO	=	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization ( <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a> )
UNFPA	=	United Nations Population Fund ( <a href="http://www.unfpa.org">www.unfpa.org</a> )
UNHCHR	=	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ( <a href="http://www.unhcr.ch">www.unhcr.ch</a> )
UNICEF	=	UN Children's Fund ( <a href="http://www.unicef.org">www.unicef.org</a> )
UNIFEM	=	UN Development Fund for Women ( <a href="http://www.unifem.org">www.unifem.org</a> )
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage ( <a href="http://www.un.org">www.un.org</a> )
VOA	=	Voice of America ( <a href="http://www.voanews.com">www.voanews.com</a> )
Web India	=	Web India ( <a href="http://www.webindia123.com">www.webindia123.com</a> )
WP	=	The Washington Post ( <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a> )

## UPDATE SUMMARY

### **COLOMBIA**

FARC releases four hostages;  
Colombia rebels take refuge in Venezuela.

### **GUATEMALA**

Police officers taken hostage;  
Guatemala to open military archives.

### **NEPAL**

Government, Madhesi talks fail;  
Political parties file nominations for CA elections.

### **UGANDA**

Government and LRA sign permanent cease-fire;  
LRA peace team consults Kony before signing disarmament agreement.

## COLOMBIA

FARC releases four hostages: The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) released four Colombian hostages to Venezuelan authorities and the International Red Cross Wednesday, February 27. Venezuelan helicopters carrying Justice Minister Ramón Rodríguez Chacín and Colombian Sen. Piedad Córdoba, as well as four Red Cross representatives and doctors took off from Santo Domingo, Venezuela and landed in San Jose Del Guaviare, Colombia before traveling into the remote jungle location where the hostages were being held. The four hostages, Gloria Polanco, Luis Eladio Pérez, Orlando Beltrán, and Jorge Gechem, were all former legislators kidnapped by FARC forces more than six years ago. After their release, Barbara Hintermann, the Red Cross Colombia director remarked, “They are in our hands and they are in a fit state to travel.” This statement came after fears that the hostages were being released because of health problems that needed immediate assistance. Talks of this release had begun last month with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez serving as the mediator between the Colombian government and the rebel group. Although Colombian president Álvaro Uribe officially canceled Chávez’s role as mediator last November, FARC guerrillas continue to trust Chávez as a sympathetic actor. This handover follows the release of two hostages earlier this year, also due in large part to the mediations between Chávez and FARC leaders. The rebels continue to hold some forty high-profile hostages, including French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt and three U.S. defense contractors, as well as more than seven hundred other hostages. Wednesday’s release raised hopes that more hostages would be freed in the near future. (Associated Press, BBC News, Reuters, February 27, 2008)

Colombia rebels take refuge in Venezuela: Former rebels, Venezuelan citizens, and Colombian officials have expressed fears over the growing number of Colombian rebels, specifically members of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN), finding refuge in Venezuela. Former rebels told The Associated Press that these rebel groups buy protection from the Venezuelan National Guard and are then able to move freely within the country. Rebel deserters told AP the Colombian insurgents were able to rest, train, buy arms and uniforms, recover from wounds, and process cocaine while settled in Venezuela. The presence of Colombian rebels within Venezuela has been an issue for many years now. However, their presence and permanency has increased over the years, particularly in the states of Zulia, Tachira, Apure, and Barinas according to residents. A resident of El Nula, Venezuela, Father Acacio Belandria said, “The rebels used to come here just to rest and recuperate. Now they have made this their territory.” Venezuelan officials blame the rise in numbers on increasingly aggressive military actions against the guerrillas by Colombian president Álvaro Uribe’s government; whereas Colombian and U.S. officials blame the increase on Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and his sympathy for the rebels’ leftist ideologies. Chávez has denied these claims and refused to discuss the rebels’ presence. Tensions between the Colombian and Venezuelan governments have been mounting over the past years, due in large part to disagreements over these insurgent groups. Chávez has continually pushed for the FARC to be seen as “belligerents” rather than a terrorist group, causing conflict between him on the one hand, and Uribe and the international community on the other. (Los Angeles Times, February 24; International Herald Tribune, February 25, 2008)

## GUATEMALA

Police officers taken hostage: Hundreds of farmers crowded around the local police station in the Caribbean coastal town of Livingston February 21 where they disarmed 29 police officers.

The farmers subsequently took the police officers by boat to the isolated village of Maya Creek where the police officers were held hostage. The farmers threatened to kill the hostages one by one unless authorities released Mayan leader Ramiro Choc, who was arrested February 14 on charges of illegal land seizures. In a telephone call that same day, Choc urged his supporters to free the hostages. After more than 24 hours in custody, the police officers were released on condition that the government consider dropping the charges against Choc and initiate a dialogue to discuss legalizing the farmers' claims to land. The Human Rights Prosecutor Office's chief advocate Rolando Yoc said that the farmers claimed they had occupied the disputed land for more than a decade, but have recently come under threat. Landless indigenous peasants, some of whom often invade land for subsistence farming, constitute almost half the country's population. Land disputes also played a role in catalyzing the 36-year civil war that ended with the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords. (Associated Press, February 22, 23; Reuters, February 22, 2008)

Guatemala to open military archives: President Álvaro Colom announced February 25 that the government was to declassify military files that likely documented the role of the military and presidential guard during the country's 36-year civil war. The documents should shed light on the murders, disappearances, and other human rights violations that occurred. "We are going to make all of the army's archives public so we can know the truth, to start building on a foundation of truth and justice," said Colom to a crowd of demonstrators gathered outside the National Palace to hear the news. A new panel led by Presidential Secretary for Peace and Human Rights Orlando Blanco was to examine which papers were to be declassified in accordance with a constitutional requirement that government records be made public unless they threatened national security. "We hope the archives will serve to clarify the history surrounding these human rights violations," said Blanco. Opposition leader Otto Pérez Molina said that the move was a political stunt and that the military files would be found to contain no evidence of orders to kill innocent people. Nevertheless, human rights groups predicted that the military files would fill in the gaps about war crimes when cross-examined with information from the National Police archives discovered June 2005. The National Police has been accused of perpetrating kidnappings and torture in collaboration with the military during the country's civil war that claimed around 200,000 lives, of which Maya Indians constituted the majority. A 1999 United Nations truth commission established that the military and presidential guards committed around 90 percent of the murders. (Reuters, February 25; Associated Press, BBC, February 26, 2008)

## NEPAL

Government, Madhesi talks fail: Rajendra Mahato, one of the leaders of the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UMDF), announced that talks between the government and the Madhesi ethnic group had collapsed and the Madhesi would have to continue their strike in the southern Terai region. The talks began Sunday, February 24 at the Prime Minister's residence in Baluwatar and were attended by many government officials, including Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Home Minister Krishna Sitaula and Mahantha Thakur, Hridayesh Tripathy, Rajendra Mahato, and Upendra Yadav as the representatives for the UDMF. The Madhesi, an ethnic group living in southern Nepal, had asked the interim government to postpone the national Constituent Assembly election scheduled for April 10 until their demands for more autonomy, greater representation in the national assembly, proportional representation in government institutions, and compensation for those killed during protests were met. The government was willing to meet all of the demands, except the plea for autonomy, which government representatives argued would lead to more ethnically-based demands in this diverse country. Following the failure of

these peace talks, the Madhesi continued their protests throughout the Terai. The strike has led to the deaths of police and civilians and has brought on nationwide shortages of rice and fuel as the protestors have blocked essential transportation into Kathmandu. These shortages have led to the closing of schools, hospitals, and businesses throughout the country. The UMDF is a coalition group made up of three new political parties – Madhesi People’s Rights Forum, led by Upendra Yadav; Nepal Sadbhavana Party, led by Rajendra Mahato; and Tarai-Madhesi Democratic Party, led by Mahantha Thakur. Formed in beginning of this year, the front was meant to more powerfully represent the needs and demands of the Madhesis, an often marginalized ethnic group in Nepal. (BBC News, February 25, 27; International Herald Tribune, Nepal News, February 25, 2008)

Political parties file nominations for CA elections: Leaders of thirty-three political parties submitted their nominations for the Constituent Assembly (CA) polls under the first-past-the-post system Monday, February 25. Despite widespread protests throughout the country, particularly in the south led by the Madhesi parties, 2,191 candidates were nominated in 240 election constituencies according to the Election Commission. In Kathmandu, many high-profile candidates, including Maoist chairman Prachanda, went to the city hall to file their candidacies accompanied by crowds of supporters. After filing his nomination, Prachanda told reporters, “Now the country is heading toward building a new Nepal ... per the wishes of the great martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of people’s sovereignty.” King Gyanendra did not make a public statement about the nominations on Monday. The election of April 10 would serve to create a special assembly to rewrite the national constitution of Nepal, bringing an end to the constitutional monarchy and establishing a federal republic. The interim coalition government was created in April 2006 to help draft a new constitution for Nepal. Though the elections have already been postponed twice, the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists have been working together to make certain that the upcoming election will take place as scheduled. (International Herald Tribune, February 25; The Hindu, February 26; Kantipur Online, February 27, 2008)

## UGANDA

Government and LRA sign permanent cease-fire: On February 23, a permanent cease-fire agreement was signed in Southern Sudan’s capital, Juba. The agreement was an important step towards a final agreement that could end the 22-year war in northern Uganda. After the signing of the agreement, United Nations envoy Joaquim Chissano said, “It is the laying down of arms. It is the end of the war.” Mediator and vice president of Southern Sudan, Riek Machar, presided over the signing. The cease-fire would prohibit rearmament or recruitment by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and confines the LRA to a temporary assembly area in South Sudan until demobilization takes place. The agreement creates a buffer zone patrolled by Southern Sudanese troops six miles around the LRA assembly area. In the north, violence has decreased since peace talks resumed in January, and refugees have slowly begun to migrate back to their home villages from refugee camps. Representatives of aid agencies are worried that once the final peace agreement is signed, regarding disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, a mass return to home villages could ensue. The conflict in northern Uganda killed tens of thousands of people and displaced nearly two million more, who were forced to relocate to crowded refugee camps during the last 22 years. The peace talks have taken place intermittently since July 2006 and within the last few months the government and LRA rebels have been

coming closer to a final peace agreement. (Africa News, The International Herald Tribune, February 25, 2008)

LRA peace team consults Kony before signing disarmament agreement: The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) negotiating team requested that mediator Riek Machar adjourn peace talks to give the team time to speak with its leader, Joseph Kony, about the fifth and final stage of the peace process. The final stage of the peace process is the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) agreement. The team was scheduled to leave Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan February 27 for Reikiwbwa, Southern Sudan, with a copy of the final draft agreements for Kony to assess. The spokesman for the Ugandan government's delegation, Chris Magezi, said, "We tentatively have March 6 as the date for signing the final agreement and this will be witnessed by presidents from Kenya [Mwai Kibaki], Tanzania [Jakaya Kikwete], Mozambique [Fernando Guebuza], South Africa [Thabo Mbeki], Democratic Republic of the Congo [Joseph Kabila], and the Sudan [Omar El-Bashir]." Kony's negotiating team rejected the proposed date of the signing, signaling that the last step in the peace process may take more time than expected. The LRA has been fighting the Ugandan government since 1986, committing atrocities towards civilians of the northern regions. Peace talks have been ongoing since 2004 but a final resolution of the Uganda conflict is still pending. (BBC Monitoring Middle East, February 26; Africa News, February 27, 2008)