

Conflict Update
Countries of Focus for the Institute's Dedicatory Conference
June 15, 2001
(Volume 1, Number 1)

This is the first conflict update of the summer 2001 Internship Program at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. This summer's interns are Jennifer Fullerton (University of San Diego), Sarah Laubach (University of San Diego), Scott Huntley (University of North Carolina), and Tiffany Santos (University of California at Berkeley)

The countries for the conflict updates are also the countries that have been chosen to focus on at the Institute's dedicatory conference, "Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century," December 5-7, 2001.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Presidents of Uganda and DRC to discuss peace: Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced June 9 the scheduling of direct talks between DRC President Joseph Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The talks would be aimed at normalizing relations between Uganda and DRC, and finding a peaceful solution to the war in DRC. Museveni met with Brigadier-General Mwanki Njuki, chairman of the Joint Military Commission (JMC), to discuss plans for withdrawing foreign armies from the DRC, and plans for the disarmament of Interahamwe, Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and other forces under the mandate of the JMC. The JMC was created as a component of the July 1999 Lusaka Peace Accord and was charged with monitoring the implementation of the accord. (IRIN, June 11, 12, 2001)

Militia movements in northeastern DRC result in heavy fighting: Attempts made by Interahamwe, former Rwandan Armed Forces (Ex-FAR), and Burundian rebels of the Forces pour la Defense de la Democratie (FDD) to reenter Rwanda along the northeastern border resulted in clashes the week of June 11 between the Rwandan army and rebels. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed concern over the militia incursions into Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania to evade participation in the disarmament initiative, and recommended a one-year extension of the mandate for the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC). Kin Kiey Mulamba, spokesman for Rwandan backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD-Goma) warned of the destabilizing effect of "negative forces" near the perimeter of RCD controlled towns of Goma, Bukavu, and Uvira. (IRIN, June 11, 12, 2001)

GUATEMALA

Military officials prosecuted for murder of Bishop: A three-judge tribunal found retired army Col. Byron Lima Estrada, his son, Captain Byron Lima Oliva, and former presidential bodyguard Jose Obdulio Villanueva guilty June 8 of the April 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi. This case marked the first time that a military officer has been successfully prosecuted for human rights abuses. Mario Orantes, a Roman Catholic priest, was convicted as an accomplice to the crime. The Roman Catholic Church announced plans June 12 to conduct a religious trial of Orantes for his involvement in the Gerardi murder. Bishop Gerardi, a leading human rights activist, was killed April 1998 two days after he released the Catholic Church's report on wartime abuses, which concluded that the military was responsible for the death of more than 200,000 Guatemalans during the 36-year civil war. (CNN, June 12, 13; Human Rights News, June 12, 2001)

Mayan communities accuse Rios Montt of genocide: The Centre for Legal Action on Human Rights in Guatemala City (CALDH) filed a legal suit, launched on behalf of 12 Mayan communities, against officials of the military government of General Ephraim Rios Montt for the massacre of more than 1,200 indigenous people in 11 separate incidents. Montt, the former military dictator and current head of Congress, was accused June 6 of acts of genocide in the context of his "scorched earth" policy as former president during the early 1980s. Military officials denied accusations and cited that Mayans fought both for the leftist movement, and for the army and paramilitary groups. For the first time in Central America a lawsuit was brought forth that accused a sitting political figure of genocide. Montt directed the "scorched earth" policy of racial extermination during his reign. (Guardian, June 7; LA Times, June 6; World Press Review, July 2001)

MACEDONIA

Government declares cease-fire: A temporary cease-fire was declared June 11 by the government of Macedonia. A spokesperson for the ethnic Albanian rebels said they would adhere to the directive. The cease-fire was proposed, according to Macedonian National Security Advisor Nikola Dimitrov, to provide water to the city of Kumanovo, where fighting caused the city's occupants to be cut off from their water reservoir. However, the reprieve from the fighting could be militarily advantageous to the Albanian rebels, allowing them to consolidate their hold on occupied areas, regroup forces, and restock weapons. The cease-fire halted a four-day army bombardment of guerilla-held areas and the rebels' threatened attack on the capital city, Skopje. The cease-fire was violated by a rebel ambush on a police vehicle June 11, but ethnic Albanian rebels apologized for the attack, calling it a "mistake." This cease-fire was the first that both sides officially agreed to at the same time. As of June 15 the open-ended cease-fire was still holding. Conflict broke out in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia in February 2001 and has continued despite diplomatic intervention, and limited dialogue

between the government and rebels. Albanians make up between a third and a quarter of Macedonia's population of two million. (BBC, June 11,12; Reuters, June 11, 2001)

Government threatens to declare war: Following an ethnic Albanian rebel ambush on June 5 in the city of Tetovo that resulted in the death of five government soldiers and the wounding of police officers, the government threatened to declare a state of war against the Albanian rebels. Experts have speculated that the declaration of war would end Macedonia's current coalition government which represents both ethnic Albanians and Slavs, further polarize Macedonia's two ethnic groups, and anger the international community, which has been involved in diplomatic and peacekeeping activities in Macedonia. A two-thirds vote in the 120-seat parliament would be necessary to accomplish the declaration of war. (CNN, June 7; New York Times, BBC, June 6, 2001)

Talk of peace agreements; refugees flee in record numbers: Macedonian President Boris Trajovski June 8 proposed offering amnesty for ethnic Albanian rebels who choose to cease fighting. Amnesty would not be extended toward the guerilla leaders, who "will be eliminated unless they go back where they came from," according to Trajovski. Meanwhile, the Albanian guerrillas declared they secured an area eight kilometers from the capital city of Skopje and were in striking range from the Skopje airport and oil refinery. EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana reported that all Macedonia's political parties represented in the coalition government have accepted the president's plan. Despite these attempts to secure the end of the conflict, thousands of civilians, most of whom are Albanian, fled Macedonia in fear of all-out war. The UNHCR estimated that 18,000 refugees, many from Skopje and surrounding areas, have fled north to Kosovo. (BBC, June 8, 9; Reuters, June 11, 2001)

NEPAL

Government charges journalists with treason: Authorities arrested an editor and two executives of Kantipur Daily newspaper June 6 for suspected treason. A three-judge bench ordered June 12 for the government to file a charge sheet by 9:30 am June 15, or the defenders will be freed. The charges resulted from an article published in the Daily written by Maoist rebel leader Baburam Bhattarai. The article accused new King Gyanendra of being part of a conspiracy to kill his brother, the late King Birendra. This was the first time since Nepal's constitutional monarchy was established in 1990 that employees of a mainstream paper have been arrested. Bhattarai's Maoist group launched a revolt in 1996 to install a one-party communist republic. Since its beginning more than 1,500 people have been killed. (BBC, June 6; Kathmandu Post, June 13; New York Times, June 7, 2001)