



Peace & Justice Update
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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)
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)
Prensa Libre	=	Prensa Libre (www.prensalibre.com)
PANA	=	Panafrican 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)
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)

UPDATE SUMMARY

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COLOMBIA

Red Cross emblem used in July 2 hostage rescue. According to unpublished video and images released by CNN, the symbol for the Red Cross was displayed on one bib during a Colombian hostage rescue July 2. The emblem, an internationally recognizable symbol for the Red Cross, denotes the humanitarian aid organization's neutrality. Codes 37, 38 and 85 of the Geneva Conventions Protocol One prohibit the use of this emblem in any case, and a violation constitutes a "war crime" and a violation of international humanitarian law. International legal expert Mark Ellis cites the very serious nature of this transgression: "It is clear that the conventions are very strict regarding use of the symbol because of what it represents: impartiality, neutrality. The fear is that any misuse of the symbol would weaken that neutrality and would weaken the [Red Cross]." He went on to say, "If you use the emblem in a deceitful way, generally the conventions say it would be a breach. [Based on the information as explained to me,] the way that the images show the Red Cross emblem being used could be distinguished as a war crime." The operation also included bogus communications announcing a transfer of hostages, MI-17 military helicopters disguised with paint, and a number of fraudulent humanitarian symbols and fabricated organization names. A military source offered to sell material comprising both video footage and photographs of the operation taken July 2 to CNN, however, the network declined to purchase at the price demanded. The material shows one man wearing a standard white bib with the emblem of the Red Cross on the chest, set in the center of two black circles. Though blurred in some photographs, the same man is seen in pre-departure photos, during the operation, and after, sporting the same bib, tied at the sides. All other fraudulent symbols had been removed and burned after the operation, but the bib's fate is still in question. Meanwhile President Alvaro Uribe and his generals have denied such misuse during the rescue operation of 15 hostages, including former senator Ingrid Betancourt, three American contractors, and 11 Colombian military and police personnel. They, along with Colombian Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, Armed Forces Chief Gen. Freddy Padilla and Army Chief Mario Montoya all stated after the operation that no legitimate humanitarian aid emblem had been used. However, on July 18, Uribe made a formal apology to the Red Cross in Bogotá. It has been confirmed that one nervous soldier, mistakenly and contrary to orders, had indeed worn the bib during the course of the operation. The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva accepted President Uribe's apology. (CNN July 17, The Advertiser (Australia) July 18, 2008)

Mass protests held in Colombia and France: On July 21, hundreds of thousands of Colombians marched the streets of 45 towns and cities simultaneously in protest against kidnappings, and demanded the release of hostages still held by leftist guerrilla groups. Many wore white shirts with messages painted on them, or simply the name of a current hostage. It was one of the largest mass protests in the country's history. The events took place on the eve of Colombia's Independence Day, and boasted an international cooperative effort. Others joined in the protest across Latin America, Europe, and the United States, and recently released hostage and French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt led the march herself in Paris. An estimated 2,800 persons are still held captive by rebel groups, most notoriously the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). President Alvaro Uribe teamed with the Presidents Alan García of Peru and Luis Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil as they led protests in smaller cities along their respective borders. Colombia's vice-president Francisco Santos led one of 10 marches in the capital, and Colombian pop star Shakira sang the national anthem at a military parade over which President Uribe and visiting dignitaries presided, and she led an event in the city's main stadium. (The Guardian (London), The Irish Times, Jul 21, 2008)

SIERRA LEONE

Refugees to lose status: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that those who fled Sierra Leone during the war as refugees will officially lose their refugee status January 1, 2009. Dillah Doumaye, a representative of UNHCR stated, "Today the situation has returned to normal in Sierra Leone and living conditions are no tougher than in Guinea." Doumaya went on to state, "We have concluded that there is no longer a good reason why a Sierra Leonean should be a refugee in another country." The remarks referred to the high number of Sierra Leonean refugees currently residing in Guinea, which received a large number of refugees from both Sierra Leone and Liberia during the 1990s (around 600,000 people). As the war came to an end in 2004, the United Nations helped 100,000 Sierra Leonean refugees to return to their homes from Guinea. However thousands refused to leave, with many seeking political asylum in the west. However, Doumaya said to Reuters, "If a refugee thinks he has good reasons not to return home, he must give the UNHCR a detailed account of these reasons and it will study them." (Reuters, July 21, 2008)

Floods bring rampant disease: In Kroo Bay, one of the poorest areas of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, ailments such as malaria, pneumonia, respiratory infections and worm infestations have become commonplace. The slum's 6,000 inhabitants have a life expectancy ten years lower than the national average of 45 years. As the place where two rivers merge and most of the rainwater from Freetown drains, Kroo Bay is prone to flooding and suffers from widespread contamination. Residents have begun to pave paths through the town with cans and toothpaste tubes. Kroo Bay is one of the contributing factors to Sierra Leone's ranking last place in the UN Development Index. However, the British non-governmental agency, Save the Children, is trying to help address the major health and education needs in the slum. Save the Children has provided money for flood prevention; built walkways; and provided health and hygiene training to many of the poor people in the community. It has also funded the Blue Cross Volunteers, made up of local young volunteers trained to administer basic first-aid and to educate the community. The Blue Cross Volunteers also help those suffering from waterborne illnesses such as diarrhea and cholera. "Diarrhea is the main sickness we are called on to treat. When people get it, they can come to us and we give them the [rehydration salts] to cure it," says Unisa Turay, one of the 60 Blue Cross Volunteers in Kroo Bay. "I wanted to do this because I can't just sit watching people in my community suffering and dying. I see helping other people like helping myself." (Irin, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; July 22, 2008)

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka rejects rebel-proposed ceasefire: The Sri Lankan Government has rejected a unilateral ceasefire proposed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The 10-day ceasefire was to take place during the 15th Annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit (SAARC), July 26 to August 6. However, the rebels warned that they would be forced to defend themselves if the government took offensive action against them. But the Sri Lankan Government has said that raids on rebel-controlled areas will continue and that they have no intention of abiding by the Tigers' plan. As Secretary General of the Sri Lanka Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process, Rajiva Wijesinha stated, "You have to look at it historically, there has been a tendency to have a ceasefire in order to build up their strength." This comes just days after the LTTE refused to comply with President Mahinda Rajapaksa's terms for peace talks, which would have required the Tamil Tigers to disarm in order to end the governments' continuing offensive on northern rebel-held areas. The head of the LTTE's political wing, Balasingham Nadesan, had told the Associated Press "It is impossible to hold peace talks when one party, the government of Sri Lanka, is undertaking large-scale military offensives." (Reuters, ABC Radio; July 22; AP, July 21, 2008)

Heavy security dominates Sri Lankan weddings: Hotels all over Colombo have been forced to cancel weddings and banquets in order to comply with the Sri Lankan government's new security plan for the upcoming 15th Annual South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit which will result in the arrival of over 1,000 international delegates. Despite the time period being deemed auspicious by astrologers, weddings booked as far as a year in advance were canceled due to fears of civilians being attacked, and the numerous five-star hotels and resorts will be closed to outsiders during the SAARC summit. According to Shanthi Kumar, the City Hoteliers' Association president, the revenue brought in by weddings has become essential to the hotel industry, which has suffered from decreased tourism, itself a result of ongoing violence between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It is thought that hotels in Sri Lanka will lose about 190 million Rs (around 1.7 million dollars). Sri Lankan weddings held in hotels can cost more than twenty times the average annual income, and many poor workers put their life savings into their children's' weddings. (AP, July 22; The Sunday Leader, July 19, 2008)

UGANDA

Funds allocated for northern peace plan: Both the Government of Uganda and donors have pledged 1.1 trillion shillings (about 650 thousand dollars) for the Peace Restoration and Development Plan (PRDP). The three year project will direct its funds to the reconstruction of Northern Uganda. David Wakikona, the Minister of Northern Uganda, described the plan at a hotel meeting in Kampala on July 17. "The PRDP seeks to contribute to community recovery [and] improve the conditions and quality of life of displaced persons and reintegration of displaced populations," Wakikona explained. "It will also initiate rehabilitation and development activities among other resident communities and ensuring that the vulnerable are protected and served." Schools, roads, and health care facilities are among the infrastructural needs for rehabilitation. Wakikona cited other projects, namely the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, and the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Program as additional sources of aid for people recovering from the twenty-year war. The plan was announced despite the suspension of the Juba Peace Process between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. (Africa News, Jul 17, 2008)

Over 400,000 backlogged criminal cases on record with Police: According to a July 18 article in Kampala's online news source, *New Vision*, police report 418,000 backlogged cases have accumulated over the last seven years. These cases are either still under investigation or had been delayed by the end of 2007, and include both minor offenders convicted of theft, burglary, arson, counterfeiting, aggravated assault and serious offenses such as murder, rape, and robbery. As many as 70,000 murderers, rapists and robbers could be dismissed because of lack of sufficient evidence, or delays in the investigation and prosecution. In 2007, out of 231,000 cases, about half were still pending investigation at the conclusion of that year. Cases that go unconcluded in a reasonable time period lose urgency as new cases are established, and thus the backlog grows while the cases accumulate over time. This is a serious problem for the government, lawyers, and human rights groups. Ugandan Human Rights Commission spokeswoman Margaret Sekaggya cites a lack of both resources and personnel to accommodate a "rapidly growing population" and more sophisticated crime methods. She has encouraged the government to allocate the appropriate funds, thoroughly train police departments, and recruit more personnel in order to handle the growing backlog problem. (New Vision, July 18, 2008)