



**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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## **CAMEROON**

Cameroonian and Nigerian governments proceed as planned amid court orders of suspension and declarations of independence. Upheaval continues over the transfer of the Bakassi Peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon, scheduled for August 14 as designated by the International Court of Justice in the Green Tree Agreement. Reports have emerged from Nigeria that July 31 the Federal High Court in Abuja ordered a suspension of the transfer until a case filed by Bakassi indigenes, including two former Bakassi local government officials, could be heard. The court does not resume until October 20. The Nigerian government in response stated "If there are legal hurdles, the president is fully committed to addressing those hurdles so that the handover can go on as planned. Nigeria will not abandon its sovereign responsibilities and international obligations." President Umaru Yar'Adua has already directed the Minister of Justice to start proceedings to overturn the ruling. On the Cameroon side, a recent report from The Post claims that rebels declared the independence of Bakassi July 25 as the Bakassi Movement for Self-Determination (BAMOSD) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) joined together. The rebels warned that they were prepared to attack any government forces that oppose Bakassi's independence and enter into the region. They further stated that they have stepped in as the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from the region leaves the Bakassi people exposed, defenseless to "perpetual and permanent bondage of exploitation, under-development and death." Secession was already threatened by the Southern Cameroons Peoples Organization (SCAPO) a week prior to the rebels' declaration. Neither government seems to be responding to the rebels; the media made no reference to the groups in reporting a July 28 meeting between Cameroon's Minister of External Relations Henri Ayissi and Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chief Ojo Maduekwe. In the meeting Ayissi accused the international media of manipulating the conflict over Bakassi in order to incite hostility between Nigeria and Cameroon. He labeled Bakassi a strengthening point between the two countries, a point of communication and joint efforts like a joint security system. Meanwhile, residents continue to flee the area, settling into Calabar and the Iking area of the Cross River State region. (Global Insight, August 1; Leadership, July 29; The Post, July 31; This Day, August 2, 4 2008)

Former Minister of External Relations arrested for Albatross scandal. Former Minister of External Relations Jean Marie Atangana Mebara was arrested August 1 for his alleged involvement in the so-called Albatross plane scandal that rocked the government in 2004. The plane, which was purported to have cost an exorbitant \$31 million (\$20 billion FCFA), was a Boeing 767-200 with mechanical problems, made apparent when it almost crashed during its inaugural flight with the President and his family on board. The plane is speculated to have been around 18 years old. Investigations have been ongoing concerning the transaction, specifically with the allotment of funds. Mebara was first questioned April 25 following the March 30 arrest of colleagues Urbain Olangue and Polycare Abah Abah. The Post reports that between his questioning and arrest Mebara was trying to assert pressure on President Paul Biya to exonerate him. The government was criticized recently for the June 3 interrogation and arrest of two journalists who wrote about the scandal for publishing "the report of a judicial investigation that has not yet been tried." (The Post, May 26, June 6, 10, August 4, 2008)

## **COLOMBIA**

Uribe lauds other governments at Regional Anti-Drug Summit: In his opening remarks at the Regional Anti-Drug Summit in Cartagena, Colombia, August 1, President Alvaro Uribe addressed the governments of Venezuela and Mexico and expressed thanks for their continued cooperative efforts in dismantling drug cartels and crime. The summit included the presidents of five other countries: Antonio Saca of El Salvador, Álvaro Colom of Guatemala, Felipe Calderón of Mexico, Martin Torrijos of Panama, and Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic. At the summit's opening, Uribe thanked Venezuela for its cooperation in the capture and deportation of FARC guerrilla Gabriel Culma Ortiz and then thanked Mexico for assistance with the arrest of narcotics trafficker Ever Villafane Martinez. Ortiz is the alleged replacement for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia leader, alias "César," who has been named as the captor of Ingrid Betancourt and other recently rescued hostages. Martinez was captured July 31 and identified as the link between various Colombian narcotics trafficking groups. Uribe said, "The capture yesterday of Ever Villafane in Mexico is a very important step in the process of dismantling the large drug cartels. We celebrate this." After these congratulations he also recognized the realities of narcotics trafficking and coca production in Colombia, and pledged his continued determination to defeat narco-traffickers. He further acknowledged the negative effects on the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic specifically, as well as other countries in South and Central America, and encouraged ongoing partnerships in these operations in the front against narcotics trafficking. Delegations from 26 countries were expected to sign the Declaration of Cartagena, a joint confrontation of drug-trafficking in Central and South America and the Caribbean. (BBC Monitoring Latin America, August 5, 2008)

Colombia rejects offer of mediation: Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua's leftist president who led the most recent armed Marxist rebellion in Latin America, has offered himself as a mediator between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). "I tell our brothers in FARC that I am willing to offer my support for a serious peace initiative in Colombia," Mr. Ortega told a political rally one month ago. It was there that he offered himself as a mediator to the 44-year conflict. Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe stated that the help is neither needed nor welcome. *La Prensa*, Nicaragua's leading news publication, reported that FARC leaders were invited to an official celebration commemorating the July 19, 1979 military victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, then a guerrilla movement led by Ortega and others, and today the ruling political party. The FARC delegation arrived surreptitiously July 17 in Nicaragua for the event, though Nicaraguan officials deny this report and nothing has been confirmed. The Colombian government has accused Nicaragua of "transiting terrorists" and requested an international police investigation. Colombian Foreign Minister Jaime Bermudez denounced any support that Ortega might propose alongside FARC, sending a clear message to Ortega's offer for mediation. FARC has meanwhile requested recognition as a legitimate political body with "belligerent status" and a piece of Colombian territory before peace negotiations take place. The differences between the leftist rebels and Colombia's right-wing president have proved irreconcilable thus far. Ortega is not the first to attempt a role as mediator; Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez, French President Nicholas Sarkozy, and Swiss negotiators have all failed. (The Washington Times, August 5, 2008)

## **GUATEMALA**

Attorney-General resigns: Attorney-General Juan Luis Florido's July 29 resignation from his post was welcomed by various nongovernmental organizations which have lambasted Florido for inefficiency and corruption over his four-year term. The director of Security in Democracy (SEDEM), Iduvina Hernández, had accused the prosecutor's office under Florido of having "zero effectiveness" in cases regarding attacks on human rights defenders. Hernández also stated that only two percent of crimes are solved. Human rights activist Miguel Ángel Alvisures said of the current system that "judgments are practically paralyzed, for one reason or another. The advances that are seen are very, very small, and it is public knowledge that a high percentage of reported crimes don't even reach trial, are not investigated." As a testament to the high level of crime in Guatemala, Ronald Chang, the brother of human rights activist Helen Mack and of the anthropologist Myrna Mack murdered by the military in 1990, was shot and injured shortly before Florido tendered his resignation. Florido resigned after a meeting with President Colom for what Álvaro Colom described as "strictly personal reasons." The president had offered Florido a diplomatic appointment, but Florido indicated that he has not decided whether to accept. In a final press conference, Florido denounced critics, saying that many were trying to minimize the advances made. Colom's new appointee, district attorney José Amílcar Velásquez Zárate, promised changes in an interview with Guatemalan newspaper Prensa Libre. The director of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), Carlos Castresana, said that CICIG "wants to have the opportunity to establish a plan of action with the new attorney-general; therefore we are looking forward to his arrival, in order to continue with the work that has already been started." Florido's resignation is one of several high-government changes that have occurred since President Colom took power. Two senior members of the defense ministry were also dismissed July 29, joining the ranks of – among others – former bank superintendent Willy Zapata, Minister of Health Eusebio del Cid and Vice-minister of Education Francisco Rosales, who have all left their posts in the past six months. (AFP; Latinnews Daily, Prensa Libre, July 30; Global Insight, July 31, 2008)

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights files petition against State of Guatemala in Court of Human Rights: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) filed a petition entitled "Las Dos Erres" with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights July 30. The petition regards the lack of judicial response by the state of Guatemala concerning the December 1982 massacre in the village of Las Dos Erres, Petén in which the Guatemalan Army was responsible for the deaths of 251 residents. While acknowledging the positive steps that have been taken in response to the massacre, such as recognition of responsibility through the dissemination of knowledge of such events and subsequent attempts at reparations, IACHR was unsatisfied that this fulfilled a state's duty to pursue judicial accountability for those responsible. As the commission emphasized, "...it is the duty of the Guatemalan state to provide an adequate judicial response, to establish the identity of those responsible, and to prosecute and punish them accordingly." The IACHR concludes in its petition that, among other allegations, the state of Guatemala is responsible for violating citizens' right to life, judicial protection, humane treatment and personal liberty. The Inter-American Commission also filed petitions against Peru and Venezuela during the month of July. The court, based in Costa Rica, is an independent branch of the Organization of the American States (OAS). The court has already heard and ruled on several cases pertaining to Guatemala, such as the 2004 judgment in the case of Myrna Mack Chang v. Guatemala over the 1990 murder of the well-known anthropologist. (IACHR, Prensa Libre, August 1, 2008)

## **NEPAL**

Political consensus paves way for unified government: Nepal's four main political parties announced August 4 that they had reached basic agreement on the formation of a Maoist-led national government. Following a meeting at the Maoists' parliamentary office, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) and Madhesi People's Rights Forum publicly acknowledged their intent to move forward with developing the new government. The four also agreed on the implementation of an amended version of the Maoist-proposed Common Minimum Program (CMP), a set of goals the government will be obligated to fulfill during its term. The move is an important step forward in the long drawn-out political process following April's legislative elections. For months, representative parties had been unable to reach consensus agreement on who was to hold the presidential seat. A recently passed amendment to the interim constitution solved this problem by allowing for majority selection of high posts by the Constituent Assembly. As a result, Ram Baran Yadav was selected as the nation's first president July 20. Following the vote which put the president in office, Maoist representatives threatened to boycott the new government, though Yadav and others pointed out the importance of the CPN-M in stabilizing the political process and called for their cooperation. The Maoists responded by issuing three demands, one of which was passage of the CMP. The next step faced by the new government will be to reach agreement on a basic set of principles for Nepal's new constitution. (Himalayan Times, Kantipur Online, Nepalnews.com, 4 August 2008)

Controversy over VP's use of Hindi continues: Protests erupted throughout Nepal amid claims that Vice President Paramananda Jha unconstitutionally used Hindi when being sworn into office July 23. A motion was filed with the Supreme Court requesting that Jha repeat the oath in Nepali or face removal from office. Although Hindi is understood widely throughout Nepal, it is not an official language; public officials are required to take the oath of office in either Nepali or their ethnic language. Jha could have chosen to use his ethnic Maithali, but opted for Hindi as a gesture of his support for its becoming an official language in Nepal. Immediately after the swearing-in, student groups deemed the gesture offensive, and members of the Tharu community labeled it an attempt to undermine national integrity. Tharus, residents of the Western Terai region, make up Nepal's largest indigenous group and have stood against the Madhesi parties' demand for 'one Madhes, one province.' Jha maintains that he intended no harm and that he respects all languages spoken in Nepal. The vice president has apologized for unintentionally offending any members of the populace, and pointed out that the written version of the oath he signed was in Nepali. (Nepalnews.com, 25 July; AP, BBC, 28 July; Himalayan Times, 29 July 2008)

## **SIERRA LEONE**

One year after national elections, Crisis Group report addresses Koroma government performance: A new report from the International Crisis Group (ICG) entitled “Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform” looks at the progress that the country has made since its civil war ended in 2002, as well as the performance of President Ernest Bai Koroma, who came into power alongside his All People’s Congress (APC) party in 2007. The report indicates that Koroma’s win restored legitimacy to the electoral process in Sierra Leone, but that more needs to be done to allow the country to succeed. Daniela Krosiak, Deputy Director of Crisis Group’s Africa Program, stated, “Koroma faces a fundamental political challenge, to build public confidence in his agenda at the same time as donor support is gradually being cut back. If he is to improve accountability and fight corruption, he needs to do more than call for ‘attitudinal change’ and a renewed ‘social contract.’” In addition, the report makes a number of recommendations to the government of Sierra Leone, including the formation of a National Development Plan and assurance that future government audits will be bipartisan in nature. As the cost of food is rising, international donors have become increasingly important. Therefore, ICG’s recommendations were also addressed to those who donate funds to Sierra Leone, asking them to support the National Development Plan as well as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). ICG was founded in 1995 and seeks to be a non-partisan provider of analysis and advice for governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. (International Crisis Group, July 31, 2008)

Mining accident leaves two missing and dozens wounded: Dozens were injured when a mining dredge capsized and crashed to the ground July 28 at the Sierra Rutile Limited mines. There were a reported 50 personnel on board the specialized mining excavator, and all but two have been accounted for. The government continues to search for the two missing workers. In addition to the possible loss of life, the Sierra Rutile Limited mining company must also cope with the loss of the mining dredge, which was commissioned in January 2008 by President Ernest Bai Koroma at an estimated cost of \$27 million. Now, in the aftermath of the incident, the government of Sierra Leone has set up a committee composed of members from the British Department for International Development (DFID) in order to oversee operations and to review all existing mining agreements in the country. (All Africa, July 28; Cocorioko Newspaper, July 31, 2008)

## **SRI LANKA**

United States expresses concern over treatment of media personnel in Sri Lanka: United States Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher stated that more must be done by the government of Sri Lanka to help prevent abductions, intimidation, and general human rights abuses against media personnel. In a press conference given in conjunction with the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in Colombo, Boucher remarked, “We have been concerned about the continuing reports of abductions, disappearances, the detention of some people and reports of intimidation against the media. All these things need to be stopped. The government needs to take action against the perpetrators.” Since 2008, there have been 12 incidents involving assaults on journalists, including one death. According to the Paris-based World Association of Newspapers (WAN), Sri Lanka is currently ranked as the third most dangerous place for journalists in the world, behind Iraq and Somalia. (Reuters, August 3, 2008)

Heavy fighting kills 40 combatants: Heavy fighting between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Sri Lankan troops has left 40 combatants dead. Numerous conflicts broke out, with the heaviest casualties taking place in Vellankulam, a city in the northeastern Mannar district. This area contains an LTTE stronghold which had been seized August 2 by government troops. LTTE rebels then attempted to retake the stronghold a day later, but were repelled by Sri Lankan forces, leaving 21 rebels and three soldiers dead. Other conflicts in the northern regions of Mannar and Vavunia and the Weli Oya settlement also took place on the same day, leaving a total of 16 dead. The fighting comes despite the LTTE having offered a cease-fire during the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's two-day summit, which ran August 2-3 in Colombo. However, the Sri Lankan government had rejected the cease-fire, stating that it was nothing but a chance for the LTTE to regroup for more attacks. (Associated Press, August 4, 2008)

## **SUDAN**

UN extends Darfur mission: The United Nations Security Council voted 14-0 to extend its peacekeeping mission in Darfur for an additional 12-month period, while the United States made the only abstention to the August 1 vote. The United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) – established a year ago in order to protect civilians and stem ongoing violence – was set to expire August 1, but in July the Sudanese government asked the UN to consider continuing its work in western Sudan. By extending UNAMID's mandate, the UN hopes to encourage a lasting peace in the war-torn region which has seen an estimated 300,000 killed and 2.5 million displaced, according to the UN. Although the mission's directive calls for 26,000 joint-force troops, so far only 10,000 are in place. Since its inception UNAMID has faced resistance from the Sudanese government, which demanded that the mission be composed of mainly African Union soldiers and continues to hinder the operational progress of the international forces. Furthermore, a report by several nongovernmental organizations released the same week as the mandate's renewal highlights the critical shortage of UNAMID support personnel, equipment and machinery. In response, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called upon the international community to provide the necessary tools to ensure the mission's success. Fighting in Darfur began in 2003 between Sudanese rebels and government-supported groups such as the army and Janjaweed militias. In 2006 the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed – which laid responsibility on the government for disarming the militias – but did not succeed in quelling the violence. In contradiction with victims' testimony, the government continues to downplay reports of the systematic rape of Darfur's black African population and denies involvement with militia groups, alleging that such claims are the political machinations of the West. (AP, United Nations, 31 July; BBC, 1 August 2008)

UN faces outside pressure over ICC indictment: South Africa and Libya have petitioned the United Nations Security Council to prevent the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir. The request came as the council was deliberating the renewal of its Darfur peacekeeping mission. The African nations, currently elected members of the Security Council, were supported by Russia and China, frequent allies on the council whose continued military and economic links with Sudan have been the subject of scrutiny. The African Union and Arab League had expressed earlier concerns that if successful, al-Bashir's indictment could be a setback to the peace process in Darfur. Both groups had pointed to the possibility of invoking Article 16 of the ICC statute, which allows the Security Council to suspend any of the court's prosecutions for a year at a time. South Africa and Libya followed this suggestion by proposing that a paragraph regarding such a stop be inserted into the resolution to extend the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). After extended deliberations, the final draft of the resolution which passed August 1 simply took note of the AU and Arab League's concerns. Nevertheless, rebel groups in Darfur criticized the move, saying that Darfur's security and legal issues should not be tied together. It remains to be seen whether the Security Council will return to the issue of using Article 16 in the Sudanese case. If allowed to deliberate, the ICC panel considering the indictment would not be expected to hand down its decision for several months. (Reuters, 30 July, 1 August 2008)

## **UGANDA**

Army Chief speaks out on 2011 elections: The Army Chief of the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) spoke out in Kampala about Uganda's anticipated 2011 elections, reports The Monitor. General Aronda Nyakaimira stated that Defense Forces will support the new presidential office, regardless of who is elected. At a gathering for the National Guild Presidents' Council at Makerere University, he pledged political impartiality and loyalty to the sitting Commander-in-Chief. The public address to students follows increasing anticipation for the 2011 elections and the shape of democracy in Uganda. There is speculation regarding President Yoweri Museveni's increasingly autocratic governance, and students voiced concern about repeated patterns of African democracy in which the ruling leader will refuse to relinquish power following a lost election. Some students even voiced fears of anarchy. The Army Chief offered assurances, encouraging people to vote as they pleased and to trust in the country's constitution and the loyalty of the UPDF. Reactions to General Aronda's remarks were mixed among officials and politicians, who remain skeptical about the intentions of the UPDF. Many of Museveni's former bodyguards are now military commanders, and although Museveni is no longer involved with the forces, he remains Commander-In-Chief by virtue of his presidency and often appears in public dressed in army fatigues. The UPDF grew out of the armed rebellion that originally brought him to power in 1986. Now following recent remarks regarding his intentions to run for a fourth term in 2011, citizens and officials have expressed rising concern. Uganda's elections have demonstrated a history of violence and human rights violations, and many critics point to violations to illustrate that despite Museveni's intent to professionalize the army, the UPDF has been involved in electoral violence. Uganda's Central Member of Parliament (MP) Erias Lukwago of the Democratic Party was the most dismissive of General Aronda's address. He stated, "There is no Ugandan who can believe what General Aronda is saying because his mentor [President Museveni] was riding on the same axiom of professionalizing the army, but it is still the same army of 1996, 2001 and 2006." (The Monitor (Kampala), August 4, 2008)

Baganda kingdom growing more hostile over land claims: A historical conflict has re-surfaced between the ancient Buganda kingdom and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The Baganda are accusing Museveni of breaking a promise to give back their communal lands and are claiming ownership of 9,000 square miles in central Uganda. *The Economist* reports that Museveni is dismissing their claims, further stating that their calculations are erroneous, and arguing that those who have occupied the disputed lands for the last two decades should have precedence. *The Economist* reports, "His government says that 420,000 Ugandans with land in the best parts of the country should not have priority over 30 million Ugandans who have little or none." While many applaud Museveni's position and that of Minister of Lands Daniel Atubo – who stated they can only rightfully claim 700 square miles – tensions among the Baganda are growing. Some fear this dispute could lead to war, following what many are calling the "unconstitutional arrest" of three Baganda officials last week. Buganda's State Minister for Information Medard Segona, Betty Nambooze – who is head of Buganda's team campaigning against the proposed land reforms – and the kingdom's Information and Cabinet Affairs Minister Charles Peter Mayiga were arrested a fortnight ago and later released on bail. Kampala's Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga Kizito made an appeal to the Ugandan Government and Mengo. In an annual Bible Society of Uganda meeting in Kampala, the archbishop encouraged both parties to apologize, and thanked the Prime Minister for his timely apology and the immediate release of the officials. (The Economist, July 26, 2008)