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Ingrid Betancourt threatens to file lawsuit against the government
The countries for the Peace & Justice Update have been chosen as areas of focus at the institute.

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The Peace & Justice Updates are written by the Summer 2010 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego.

The interns are Elizabeth Dean (University of California, Berkeley), Gavin Koenig (University of San Diego), Sarah Montgomery (University of California, San Diego), Maryam Rokhideh (University of California, San Diego), and Paige Wopschall (Cal Poly San Luis Obispo).
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CARIBBEAN
Cuba: Fidel Castro makes a rare TV appearance; exiled dissidents speak out from Spain

Fidel Castro on Cuban television. Source: BBC

Former Cuban President Fidel Castro spoke on Cuban television July 12, 2010, his first appearance in four years. He appeared just hours before the first round of freed political prisoners were flown to Spain but made no mention of the dissidents. The broadcast was an interview with Castro regarding foreign affairs in which he criticized the U.S. for the continued conflict in the Middle East.

Many Cuban citizens were surprised to see Castro as he all but disappeared from public light after he became seriously ill and handed over power to his brother Raul in July 2006. Although he spoke slowly and appeared thin, Castro was “relaxed and lucid” during the interview. What captivated many Cubans was not what he said, but the fact that he was well enough to appear on television. Castro remains the head of the Communist party and makes his presence and influence felt by regular newspaper editorials.

While Castro did not mention the event in his interview, the first round of freed political prisoners spoke out from Spain July 13, 2010, expressing that their wish to continue their opposition to Cuba’s leadership from overseas. The seven men, who include journalists, democracy advocates and a surgeon, left Cuba with their families July 12. Four more dissidents were expected to arrive in Spain within the week. The dissidents all suffered health problems during their seven years in prison, but seemed in reasonable condition during their appearance in Madrid. The 52 political prisoners that the Cuban government has pledged to release were all arrested in a crackdown on dissident by the Cuban government in the spring of 2003. Some speculate that by not mentioning the dissidents in his interview, Castro was implicitly expressing his approval of the prisoner release.

The U.S. State Department called the release a “positive development” but reiterated the longstanding call for “immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.” The U.S. began an embargo against Cuba in 1960, shortly after Castro took power. Although legislation has been proposed and is being considered by various committees of the House of Representatives, significant changes to U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba have yet to take place.
Haiti: Orphanages are facing insurmountable challenges

In recent weeks, attention has been drawn to the dire situation in many of Haiti’s makeshift orphanages. Because thousands of children were orphaned or were left with parents who could not provide for them after Haiti’s January 12 earthquake, orphanages played an important role in keeping Haiti’s children safe and fed. However, many are operating far beyond capacity and are unable to secure sustained funding, even with so many aid agencies operating in the country. Makeshift orphanages have been established and many organizations that were not meant to care for homeless children before the earthquake transformed to address the growing need of orphans.

The orphanages face serious shortages in supplies. Necessities such as mattresses, latrines, medical care, and continued food and water supplies are hard to come by. While it is possible to find short-term aid, finding an organization that is willing for provide sustainable, long-term funding for makeshift orphanages that many children depend on is nearly impossible. With the hurricane season approaching fast and construction and rehabilitation efforts stalled, these orphanages provide children with necessities that are hard to come by elsewhere. The orphanages also help children escape the dangerous streets of Port-au-Prince where sexual abuse of women and children is on the rise. However, many orphanages have said that unless aid is received quickly cannot continue caring for children.

Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere. While more than $10 billion in international aid have been pledged, Haiti has received only a fraction of the funding promised. Six months after the disaster, Haiti remains deeply affected by the January 12 earthquake that killed 300,000 and left millions displaced. Although there are many aid agencies operating in the country, reconstruction efforts have stalled due to disorganization, land disputes, disagreements among donors, and, many believe, a lack of leadership on the part of the Haitian government.

New York Times, July 5, 2010
LATIN AMERICA

Colombia: Ingrid Betancourt threatens to file lawsuit against the government

Ingrid Betancourt, a Franco-Colombian politician who was captured in 2002, held hostage by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and rescued by the military in 2008, threatened to sue the Colombian government for damages. She claimed that negligence on the part of Colombian officials and inadequate security provided by the government led to her kidnapping and that she and her family planned to sue the government for $6.9 million. Betancourt’s lawyer filed her request for conciliation, an initial move to discuss compensation, June 30.

Betancourt later rescinded the threat of a lawsuit after facing harsh criticism from government officials. Many noted that soldiers had risked their lives to save her and that they believed her actions to be ungrateful. Betancourt said her aim in filing for compensation was to help other ex-hostages by opening the door for government compensation. She admitted that the sum was high, but explained she believed the lawsuit to be a symbolic gesture. She also expressed that she wanted to dispel criticism that she was irresponsible in taking the journey the southern town of San Vicente del Caguán in the Caquetá Department, where the kidnapping took place, explaining that the government had in fact taken away her body guards.

Betancourt was a Colombian senator and presidential candidate before she was kidnapped. Her time as a legislator was characterized by a firm stance against government corruption, which prompted many officials to be critical of her performance as senator.

Betancourt was kidnapped by the FARC in 2002 after she attempted to travel to San Vicente del Caguán to campaign for her presidency. Officials denied her permission to land a private plane in the town’s airport and refused to take her by helicopter, leaving her no choice but to make the trip by land and thus be more susceptible to attacks. Although Betancourt denied permission to fly with the then president, Andrés Pastrana, who was making a trip to San Vicente del Caguán the same day,
officials did not provide her with an armored car for her journey. San Vicente del Caguán had been a demilitarized zone used for the government and FARC officials during President Pastrana’s peace talks until the government ordered the military to take control of the area just three days before Betancourt’s visit.

(Business Week, July 9, BBC July 12, 2010)

Guatemala: Women may receive political asylum

Lesly Yajayra Perdomo, an undocumented immigrant to the United States, argues that she should be granted political asylum because her native Guatemala is so dangerous for women. Her case was turned down by two lower courts, which ruled “Guatemalan women” was too broad a category to be considered a “particular social group.” On July 12, however, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals urged immigration judges to strongly consider granting asylum to women who fear they will be murdered.

The controversy surrounding the ruling has to do with the definition of political asylum in the United States. Granting political asylum to Guatemalan women would expand asylum eligibility beyond traditional claims of political or religious oppression. Asylum is typically granted to those who can demonstrate that they are facing persecution due to religion, political beliefs, race, nationality, or membership in a particular group. Extending political asylum to Guatemalan women would make roughly half of the Guatemalan population eligible for asylum. The U.S. Department of Justice received 3,250 applications from Guatemalans in 2009 and only granted 155. Only natives of China and El Salvador made more asylum claims.

Violence against women in Guatemala has gotten worse in recent years. While the overall murder rate in Guatemala is high, the rate of violence against women is disproportionately higher. More than 3,800 women have been killed since 2000 and nearly 800 were killed in 2009. Less than 2 percent of these murders are investigated and solved. There were a total of 6,292 homicides in Guatemala in 2008, a rate of 53 per 100,000 persons.

Advocates for Guatemalan refugees say that the ruling is long overdue. Violence in the country has continued since a 36-years long civil war formally ended with peace accords in 1996.

(AP, July 13, 2010)
SOUTH ASIA
Nepal: PM election set for July 21

The Constituent Assembly is scheduled to elect a new PM July 21 (Photo taken from the 2008 presidential election)

Source: China View Link: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-07/19/content_8574431.htm

Parliament is scheduled to elect a new prime minister by a simple majority vote July 21. This comes following weeks of political deadlock in which president Ram Baran Yadav urged the major political parties—Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Nepali Congress (NC), and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML)—to form a consensus government, but no such agreement was reached.

Any one candidate will need 301 votes out of the 601-seat parliament to win the necessary majority. A number of different scenarios could potentially play out with each party vying for the post.

The Maoists are the largest party in parliament with 237 MPs. Since the party does not have enough seats to rule alone, its best chances for reaching a majority appear to be through support by minor parties, such as those from the Terai region. The party is rumored to be split among its pick for prime ministerial candidates between former prime minister and current Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal (alias Prachanda) and other deputies, of who the most prominent is Maoist vice-chairman Baburam Bhattarai.

The NC is the other major party moving to elect a candidate from its own party. The NC would need the support of the third largest and current ruling party, the CPN-UML, to gain enough votes to capture the post. The likely candidates from this party are NC parliamentary party chief Ram Chandra Poudel and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

It is also possible that a reoccurrence of the events of the presidential vote in 2008, in which no simple majority could be reached, could transpire.
President Yadav gave the parties 12 days to decide on a consensus candidate following the June 30 resignation of prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. As the deadline expired and the parties still refused to cooperate, the president sent a letter to the parliament secretariat requesting procedures for the formation of a majority government to begin. The Parliamentary Business Advisory Committee set the date for the prime minister's election the next day.

Former prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned as part of a three-point deal that allowed parliament to be extended another year and political crisis to be avoided. Nepal tendered his resignation after facing intense Maoist pressure.

The Maoists waged a ten-year armed insurgency against the state that came to an end in 2006 and resulted in the abolition of the monarchy and establishment of a republic. Parliament was elected in 2008 with a two-year mandate to complete the peace process and to draft a new national constitution. Severe disagreements between the three major political parties resulted in neither task being accomplished and the Constituent Assembly having to be extended.

The Maoist prime minister Prachanda resigned last year over the firing of the army chief, and Nepal assumed the position in May 2009.

It is feared that a majority government will further stall the peace process as political parties have said that a consensus government is needed to complete the peace process and the other parties will object to the ruling party, as indeed took place this past year.

(AFP, July 12; AP, July 13; Hindu, July 13; Indian Express, July 13; Nepal News, July 13; Times of India, July 13)

Pakistan: Bombing in tribal region kills over 100

A double suicide bombing occurred on July 9 near a government office in Peshawar, and in the Mohmand tribal region of Pakistan. The death toll from the attacks jumped from 102 to 115 on Saturday, making it the deadliest attack this year in the country.

The attackers detonated their explosives near the office of Rasool Khan, a deputy Mohmand administrator who escaped unharmed. The blast targeted officials and leaders of a government supported tribal militia in the area but it was dozens of ordinary men and women who bore the brunt of the strike. Many had lined up nearby to pick up donated food and goods such as farm equipment when the blasts occurred. The attack also wounded 168 people in Yakaghan, a village of 4,000 that lies on the edge of Mohmand and the Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa province, formerly known as North-West Frontier Province.

Peshawar continues to remain a hub for Taliban-based violence and bombings. “The government policies are responsible for this. They don’t provide security for the common people,” said Adnan Khan, a college student who lost 10 relatives including his aunts, uncles, and cousins in the bombings.

However, on July 13 authorities in Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa province rounded up more than 650 suspected militants, the end of a three-day crackdown that began shortly after the bombing. Mian Iftikhar Hussain, information minister for the North West Frontier Province, stated that “the
operation has been launched against those who are a cancer to our society and those with any links to militant groups.”

The Pakistani Taliban has retained much of its offensive capabilities despite efforts to stop terrorism. The July 9 strike showed that Islamist extremists remain a deadly force along this area bordering Afghanistan, despite pressure from army offensives or drone-fired U.S. missiles.

The U.S. has pushed Islamabad to clamp down on militants but several said it was the U.S. presence in Afghanistan that was the real cause of the violence in Pakistan.

Nevertheless, army operations and U.S. missile strikes are believed to have disrupted militants' activities enough to where attacks in the country have decreased this year so far, especially in the northwest. In the last three months of 2009, for instance, more than 500 people were killed in a surge of attacks across the country.

(The Economic Times, July 12; MSNBC, July 13; FOX News, July 10; AFP, July 13, 2010)

A Taliban and Al-Qaeda-linked bombing spree across Pakistan has killed more than 3,500 people in three years.

Source: AFP

Sri Lanka: Ex-army chief faces possible 20-year prison sentence

The Sri Lankan police have filed a new case against former army chief and defeated presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka for allegedly employing military deserters.

In January, Fonseka contested unsuccessfully against Mahinda Rajapakse for the presidency and is now being accused of employing 10 army deserters during the run-up to the presidential poll. He was accused in a criminal court hearing Monday but formal charges are not expected until the court reconvenes on July 26. Sarath Fonseka faces a possible 20-year prison sentence.

Fonseka is currently in military custody, facing a total of two courts martial and twenty-one charges due to his alleged misconduct within the Sri Lankan political arena and also for allegedly awarding illegal procurement contracts to a company where his son-in-law had an interest.
In February Fonseka was charged with “fraud, plotting against the government, creating unrest within the army and keeping army deserters under his protection” under the Sri Lankan penal Code. He was also charged with violating foreign exchange laws under the Exchange Control Act, and soon after his arrest he was held under Military Act 57(1) for divulging secrets while in service.

Sarath Fonseka led the Sri-Lankan army to a spectacular victory against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebel in May 2009, but fell out with President Rajapakse over who should take credit for the military success. Opposition lawmaker Vijtha Herath, a member of Fonseka’s Democratic National Alliance coalition party, believes “this is a political vendetta against a war hero.” (AFP, July 13; BBC, July 10, LankaPage, July 14, 2010)

General Sarath Fonseka

SOUTHEAST ASIA
Philippines: Coup plotter surrenders to government
After three years on the run, Marine Captain Nicanor Faeldon has surrendered to the government. The Filipino rebel soldier turned himself in to face charges of two coup attempts against former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Faeldon is accused of leading 300 soldiers to overtake the Oakwood Hotel in Manila July 2003. While on trial in 2007 for the coup attempt, Faeldon and other soldiers walked out of the courtroom saying they did not recognize the court’s legitimacy. He accused Arroyo of lacking the right to rule and demanded for her resignation.

On June 30 Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III was sworn into presidency as the 15th president of the Philippines. Since Aquino’s inauguration, Faeldon now views the government as legitimate. As he was taken into military custody he stated, “There is no reason for me to stay unaccountable now because we have a new government which has the mandate of the people.” Faeldon’s lawyer Trixie Angeles reported that he was not captured, but instead “voluntarily returned to his camp.”

The Philippines has a history of revolt and insurrection. The rebel group that Faeldon was involved with denounces corruption among governmental officials. Arroyo has been accused of vote rigging in the 2004 election, as well as corruption and favoritism charges during her nine years in office.
Aquino has promised to form a commission to investigate Arroyo’s presidency, but details have yet to be addressed.

(New York Times; BBC July 13, 2010)

SUDAN AND UGANDA
Sudan: Sudanese president charged with genocide

On June 12 in The Hague, the International Criminal Court (ICC) released a second arrest warrant for Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Along with the charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes, Bashir now faces the allegation of genocide. First indicted March 2009, Bashir has yet to be arrested, although he has been unable to travel to other countries for fear of being arrested. Prosecutors filed their cases and accused Bashir of “genocide by killing, genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm and genocide by deliberately inflicting on each target group conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction.”

This action by the court marks a historical moment since it is the first time that the ICC has issued genocide charges. Since 2003, there have been “reasonable grounds to believe” that Sudanese forces have attempted genocide against the Darfur tribal groups Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa. According to the UN, 2.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes since the conflict broke out.

However, the Sudanese government criticizes the court’s action. Sudanese Information Minister, Kamal Obeid, said in an official statement, “Sudan will move forward without paying attention to these desperate attempts by certain circles trying to create instability in Sudan in order to stop its development process.” Obeid continued, stating that the ICC’s decision does not concern Sudan. Spokesman for the rebel group Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Ahmad Hussein, commented that the court’s action is “a victory for the people of Darfur and the entire humanity”.

Bashir came into power in the midst of Sudan’s 21-year civil war between the North and the South. He seized power after a coup in 1989 and has reigned with an iron fist ever since. Although Bashir is wanted by the ICC, he was reelected as president in April 2010. Many opposition leaders boycotted the elections, saying that they were rigged. Bashir has denied charges of his government backing the militia group, known as the Janjaweed, who are accused of war crimes. Since the conflict began in 2003, as many as 300,000 people have been killed—numbers which the Sudanese government disputes.

(BBC; New York Times July 12, 2010)
Indicted by the ICC, President Bashir says he is unconcerned with the charges against him.

Source: BBC

**Uganda:** Bombings kill World Cup fans

The Ethiopian restaurant after the bombing July 11 in Kampala


Seventy-six people, including one U.S. citizen, have been confirmed dead as a result of bomb attacks carried out July 11 at two locations where World Cup fans had gathered to watch the soccer final. The first explosion occurred at an Ethiopian restaurant and the second, approximately 50 minutes later, at a rugby field, both in Kampala.
An unexploded suicide vest hidden in a laptop bag was found the day after the attacks at a nightclub. It is not known why the explosives were not detonated, but the fact that the ball bearing material in the vest was similar to that found at other venues clearly demonstrated that the attacks were orchestrated and that a third attack was planned to have been carried out.

The Somali militant group al-Shabab has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The terrorist group stated that the explosions were in retaliation for the presence of Ugandan peacekeeping troops in Mogadishu, Somalia. Al-Shabab has threatened further attacks against Uganda and Burundi, the other African nation with peacekeeping troops in Somalia, if troops are not withdrawn.

Four people have been arrested in connection to the bombings. Police confirmed that they are foreign nationals but have not given further details.

The terrorist group threatened that Uganda and Burundi would face retaliation for contributing forces to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) this past month. The peacekeeping forces have thwarted al-Shabab’s efforts to take control of Mogadishu, and many say that the capital would fall without the peacekeeping forces’ efforts. Uganda is the largest supplier of peacekeepers in AMISOM.

Al-Shabab is the militant wing of the Somalia Council of Islamic Courts. At one time, the Islamic Courts controlled most of southern Somalia, and it currently retains control over parts of southern and central Somalia. The group’s senior leadership is largely composed of Somalis trained by al-Qaeda forces. The U.S listed al-Shabab as a terrorist organization in 2008.

The attacks hold significance for future Ugandan foreign military action as many in the country have already begun to question their place in Somalia against the threat of future bombings.

These were the deadliest attacks in East Africa since the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 291 people.

(West Africa, July 12; National Counterterrorism Center, VOA, July 13; The Wall Street Journal, July 14; Washington Post, July 13, 2010)

WEST AFRICA

Côte d’Ivoire: Electoral Commission expands voter list

Côte d’Ivoire’s electoral commission announced July 12 that it had enlarged its provisional voter list from 5.3 million to 5.77 million to include voters who were too young to vote at the last polls. The president of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), Youssouf Bakayoko, received the provisional electoral list at the organization’s headquarters.

An official from the prime minister’s office in charge of handling election matters, Paul Koffi Koffi, indicated that the process of preparing the new provisional electoral list began from the first exercise as well as the operation to clean up what was termed the “gray list.”

There remains a dispute over the “gray” list of about 1 million would-be voters whose nationality is in doubt a major hurdle reaching to the final electoral roll. President Laurent Gbagbo’s nationalist
supporters charge that the “gray list” is full of foreign impostors from Burkina Faso and Mali. They want it fully audited, which could take months.

Following former president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny’s death in 1993, politicians began focusing on the issue of nationality and “Ivoirité” (or Ivorianness)—an ultra-nationalist, xenophobic political discourse that marginalized perceived outsiders and denied citizenship to those who were not pure Ivoirians. http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0127/p07s02-woaf.html

Thus in 2000 and following the beginning of the conflict, the notion of “Ivoirité” became an imminent cause of tension and to this day jeopardizes free and fair elections for all citizens.

The new provisional list is to be published July 15. The preparation of the provisional electoral list constitutes an important stage in the ongoing electoral process in Côte d'Ivoire. The presidential election is considered the only way of ending the country’s political crisis that broke out in September 2002 between an armed rebel group and government forces.

(Jeune Afrique, People’s Daily Online, July 13, Reuters, July 12, 2010).

Guinea: Run-off presidential election delayed

The second round of Guinea’s election will be postponed, delaying the run-off between former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo and opponent Alpha Conde. Guinea’s Supreme Court received several complaints about the integrity of the first round of the presidential election on June 27.

The proposed date for the run-off was set for July 18. Candidates had fourteen days to lodge their complaints at the court, which is then meant to rule on a final result after three days. The two-week window between the confirmation of results from the first round and a second round of voting was set out in the country’s election law.

“We are waiting to see, to approach the Supreme Court to fix a new date,” said Pathe Dieng, director of operations at the National Independent Electoral Commission.

Election observers from the European Union and the Carter Center have said they were broadly satisfied with the vote, while noting irregularities caused by logistical problems. Third-placed Sidya Touré claimed that he had been swindled out of his rightful place in the run-off, while fourth-placed Lansana Kouyaté also alleged electoral fraud.

It is expected that the Supreme Court will make a ruling next week.

The first round of elections on June 27 was widely seen as the West African state’s best chance in half a century of securing democratic civilian rule after a series of authoritarian rulers since independence from France in 1958.

(Radio France Internationale, July 9, Reuters, July 8, 2010).
Liberia: Recovery attracts global investment

The government’s efforts at seeking investors to aid the country’s recovery drive from years of conflict is beginning to yield results with large-scale investments.

In the latest of several major investment deals, the Liberian government has signed an estimated $3 billion agreement with Australian mining giant BHP Billiton. This represents Liberia's largest private investment deal, allowing the Australian company to mine iron ore in newly-discovered deposits in four counties: Nimba, Bong, Margibi and Grand Bassa. It could create 3,000 direct jobs as well as about 30,000 secondary jobs.

Prior to the BHP Billiton agreement, Liberia concluded two other major deals in the sector, with Arcelor Mittal at $1.5 billion and China Union at $2.6 billion.

Richard Tolbert, chairman of Liberia's National Investment Commission, stressed it was important for Liberia to attract investors with the finances and reputation that could bring other investors to the country. Because mining is a finite activity, he added, it was important for these companies to “create business linkages and support local businesses that will carry on after they have left.”

The Liberian economy depended heavily on iron ore before the 13-year civil war that ended in 2003. Iron ore in Liberia accounts for more than half of its export earnings. The disruption in mining caused by the war has only just begun to be reversed.

Just after the civil war, many estimates put Liberia's unemployment rate at 85 percent. Some government officials say that has dropped with new jobs being created around the country. Youths,
the main actors during the civil war, are particularly affected by unemployment. Some observers believe that finding lasting peace depends in no small measure on job creation.

Liberia is looking to new frontiers in its investments drive, including in the petroleum and renewable energy sectors. Tolbert attributed the positive developments to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. “The resources have always been here, but it’s the governance of the country that has changed,” he said.

*(All Africa, July 12, 2010).*

President Sirleaf at an event marking investment by Buchanan Renewable Energies.