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The countries for the *Peace & Justice Update* 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. Any opinions expressed herein solely reflect the views of the individual Update author(s) and in no way reflect the official views and/or positions of the IPJ, its staff, or the University of San Diego.

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

*The interns during the summer 2011 term are:*

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COLOMBIA

FARC attacks five towns in western Colombia

Five towns in the Cauca department of the western region were attacked by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) June 9. The left-wing rebels targeted the towns of Toribio, Corinto, Caldono, Jambalo and Santander. Toribio has been repeatedly targeted by the FARC, as the town is located in the mountainous region where the rebel group’s Sixth Division is active.

In Corinto, a rebel drove a truck filled with explosives into the main square where the weekly Saturday market was taking place, injuring 11 people. In Toribio, rebels drove a small bus loaded with explosives into the local police station. Police and the rebels exchanged fire, killing two civilians and one police officer, and injuring at least 60. Rebels attacked again July 10, detonating a horse-bomb and wounding two soldiers. “These attacks and the way they were carried out clearly show the cruelty and despair of the FARC,” President Juan Manuel Santos said in a statement.

In response to the violence in Cauca, President Juan Manuel Santos stated that security would be increased to put further pressure on Colombia’s largest rebel group. “We've taken the decision that from now on, security personnel will destroy any house being used by terrorists to attack government forces or civilians. No more using houses to shoot at security forces or at civilians,” Santos said.

In addition to destroying houses used by FARC rebels, President Santos has ordered a new army unit to be installed in the mountainous region of Tacueyo to reinforce the security presence in Cauca. “We will begin this immediately, and believe that this is a decision of great strategic value because it will allow security forces to operate in an area that has traditionally been used by guerrillas as a place to run to and a sanctuary,” said the President.

The Cauca department has been a region exposed to long term violence and is an important location for the smuggling of cocaine to the country’s Pacific coast. The military recently raided the camp of FARC leader Alfonso Cano in the Tolima department in its continued efforts to shut down activities by the rebel group.

Sources: BBC, July 9; Vancouver Sun, July 9; Reuters, July 10; BBC, July 11; Colombia Reports, July 11

Please send comments to: snettleton@sandiego.edu

CUBA
Cell phone and internet access growing but still limited; demographic problem of an aging population comes to light with the help of World Population Day

Cuba’s National Statistics Office recently released a telecommunications report about access to cell phones, internet, and computers, showing that cell phone usage had increased dramatically. At the end of 2010, Cubans had registered one million cell phones compared to 621,000 at the end of 2009 and 198,000 at the end of 2007.

Raúl Castro lifted restrictions on cell phone services in 2008. Under the restrictions, only foreigners and specially designated Cubans like doctors and high government officials legally had access to mobile phones. Castro also lowered the cost of activating phones to $30 from $120, a steep price in a country where the monthly salary averages $24. Monthly cell phone fees are $5 to $10 on average and are often paid with pre-paid cards. The government’s telecommunications monopoly, ETECSA, does not provide Internet access or other sophisticated services for smartphones.

The report also stated that about 16 percent of Cubans are online in some capacity with access to email, the island’s intranet or the worldwide web. Nearly 1.8 of the country’s 11.2 million residents used some kind of “Internet service” in 2010, a 12 percent increase from 1.6 million in 2009. Under the U.S. trade embargo, Cuba has not been permitted to connect to nearby underwater fiber-optic cables. Cuba has been forced to rely on slow, expensive satellite service for Internet. Castro announced a $70 million underwater cable laid with Venezuelan help this year which could be active as early as this month (July).

Although the overall number of computers rose from 700,000 in 2009 to 724,000 at the end of 2010 and personal computers rose from 62,000 to 64,000, Cuba has one of the lowest computer usage and Internet penetration rates in Latin America. Most computers are found in government offices and businesses, schools, and computer clubs, and only have access to an intranet or a system of local websites. Outside experts have estimated the real number of Cubans with access to the larger worldwide web at about 5 to 10 percent.

A separate report from the National Statistics Office revealed that the average age of the population continues to rise. The number of Cubans aged 60 or older had grown to 1,996,600 at the end of 2010, a 0.4 percent increase from 2009. According to the report, nearly 18 percent of Cubans on the island are 60 or older compared to 11.3 percent in 1985. Granma, the Cuban Communist newspaper, cited this phenomenon as a real challenge for Cuba, but remained optimistic that with the assistance of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) the governments can help mitigate the problem.


Please send comments to: kkillion@sandiego.edu

GUATEMALA
Beloved Argentinean folk singer murdered; registration for September 11 elections closes as does Torres’ bid for candidacy

Rodolfo Enrique Facundo Cabral, a highly regarded Argentinean folk singer and songwriter, was murdered July 9 on the way from his hotel to the airport after performing at a concert in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala’s second city. Cabral became famous in the early 1970’s for his protest songs.

The ambush was directed at Cabral’s music promoter Henry Fariñas, a suspected money launderer and member of the Mexican Sinaloa drug cartel. Fariñas was seriously injured in the ambush and is the subject of an investigation by Mexican authorities.

Guatemalan authorities arrested two men charged with the murder of Cabral July 12. The two suspects, Elgin Enrique Vargas Hernández and Wilfred Allan Stokes Arnold, were captured after being identified from hotel surveillance videos. Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz stated that the investigation demonstrated the coordination of Guatemala’s institutions.

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) participated in the investigation. Diego Alvarez, spokesman for the CICIG, announced that the organization had formed a team to work with Guatemalan prosecutors.

On his radio show, President Alvaro Colom hailed the two arrests and described them as improving the tarnished image of Guatemala as a violent country. Colom described the murder as a high-impact crime for Latin America and the entire world and boasted of the successful 72-hour investigation as an achievement of Guatemalan authorities through technical and scientific research.

In other news, the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE) closed registration July 13 for September 11, 2011 elections. The TSE received about a thousand less nominations than it had previously projected, but Director of the Political Organizations Department of the TSE, Francisco García Cuyún, stated that he considered the number normal. He explained that the decline resulted from the fact that of 28 registered parties, ten did not participate in the electoral process and seven other parties were members of coalitions.

Most districts have shown similar results. In Huehuetenango, TSE delegate Flor de Maria Barrientos reported that the TSE has received 150 applications to register candidates for city council and 12 for district deputies, as opposed to the same races in 2007 receiving 252 applicants for municipalities and 14 for district deputies.

The saga of Sandra Torres’ bid to become an official presidential candidate has continued. After the Supreme Court did not grant the interim relief brought by the National Unity of Hope and the Grand National Alliance (UNE-Gana) coalition and confirmed its refusal of the registration of Sandra Torres as a presidential candidate, Torres’ last option is for the UNE-Gana coalition to present an appeal to the Constitutional Court (CC). An estimated 200 to 300 of her supporters, mostly women, protested in front of the CC July 12 even though UNE-Gana has yet to submit an appeal to the CC.
HAITI

Organizations renew calls for housing development

Oxfam International released a statement July 12 warning the leadership of Haiti that the government needs to relocate the over 630,000 people still living in tents. In May, the UN Shelter Committee reported that 18 months after the earthquake, 634,000 people are still living in camps. Roland van Hauwermeiren, country director for Oxfam in Haiti, conceded, “Relocating the over 600,000 people still living in the camps was never going to be a quick fix.” The Oxfam press release has called for settling legal issues over land tenure, creating jobs to enable people to pay rent, and removing the rubble that remains in the streets.

Oxfam and Crisis Group (ICG) have agreed that a long-term comprehensive housing plan must be President Michel Martelly’s first priority. Both organizations have cited evictions as a serious problem spurring the creation of spontaneous camps. Recent reports have confirmed that over 100,000 people are under threat of being forcibly evicted from camps. Landowners have been using force and intimidation to make people living in tents move. The ICG stated that close to half of the displaced have remained in the original camps.

Martelly’s government responded to Oxfam and other organizations’ calls for a uniform resettlement policy by unveiling a plan June 15 to allow the construction of 400 houses in 100 days in the locality of Zoranje.

Patrick Rouzier, a reconstruction and housing advisor to Martelly, responded to Oxfam’s call by stating that the government plans to relocate 25,000 to 30,000 people from six major camps in a pilot program. ICG argued that the pilot plan is an important first step that deserved support, but that the most vulnerable camps should be added to the six quickly.

The City Council of Port-au-Prince decided to evacuate the displaced in the camp that occupies the space around the Sylvio Cator Stadium July 15. Mayor Muscadin Jean-Yves Jason warned the displaced that they would either leave willingly or by force. The Camp Committee estimated that the number of families living around the stadium exceeds 500.

Camp dwellers were told by Port-au-Prince city officials that they were being moved to a field along Rue Bicentenaire, a thoroughfare located between the bay and downtown Port-au-Prince, but later Friday the dwellers learned that the alternate site was not ready, leaving most of them with nowhere to go.
**CENTRAL ASIA, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Half-brother of President Karzai killed**

Ahmad Wali Karzai, the half-brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, was killed in his home in Kandahar July 12 by his own bodyguard.

President Karzai revealed the death of his half-brother in a press conference alongside French president Nicolas Sarkozy. He lamented, “My brother Ahmad Wali Karzai was killed today… The Afghanistan people have suffered a lot. Every Afghan family has suffered. I hope one day these sufferings end.”

Ahmad Wali Karzai was a very provocative figure in Afghan politics. The head of the provincial council in Kandahar, he had long been accused of drug trafficking, criminality and corruption. Despite these charges, he brought security to a Kandahar that had been destabilized for decades. Furthermore, he successfully rallied his tribes around him, advocating for a centralized Afghan government.

U.S. outgoing commander General David Petraeus immediately issued a comment conveying his condolences to the Karzai family and immediately condemned the actions. He also mentioned that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would assist the Afghan government in bringing those involved in the murder to justice. He said, “President Karzai is working to create a stronger, more secure Afghanistan, and for such a tragic event to happen to someone within his own family is unfathomable.”

The Taliban is claiming responsibility for his death, though there is no evidence proving that the Taliban carried out the attack. The Taliban has long had a history of taking responsibility for assaults that they never actually orchestrated.

Nevertheless, the mere thought of the Taliban potentially being responsible still speaks volumes about how much more work must be done to fully stabilize Afghanistan, said Afghan parliament member Daud Sultanzoi. According to Sultanzoi, “This is a show of power, [and] they show how far [the Taliban] can reach, [how] deep they can penetrate. And this means that we have to reckon
with that and be prepared for worse things. Every time they do something like this, it’s not just the action itself but it’s the message that is sent through those actions that is more important.”

Sources: Voice of America, Washington Post, CNN.com, July 12

Please send comments to ekhoda@sandiego.edu

IRAN

US deeply concerned about Iran arming Iraqi militants

Newly-appointed U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta expressed his concern over Iran providing military support for Shi’a Iraqi militants July 10. Speaking to ground troops in Baghdad, he stated, “We are very concerned about Iran and weapons they are providing to extremists here in Iraq, and the reality is that we’ve seen the results of that… In June, we lost a hell of a lot of Americans.”

In recent weeks, the U.S. force has faced an increase in attacks by Shi’a militia groups. In June, 14 U.S. forces were killed by hostile fire and three more within the first 10 days of July. Panetta specified that if such attacks were to persist, the U.S. would not be afraid to unilaterally take action against these militia groups. He urged the Iraqi government to take action as well. He asserted, “I want to assure you that this is something we’re not going to walk away from.”

Last week, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen contended that Iran has increased weapons supplies to anti-American groups, expressing his belief that such actions were a way of Iran taking credit for the American troop drawdown.

Meanwhile, radical Shi’a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stated July 10 that he would activate his Promised Day Brigade in order to attack American troops. The Brigade has already taken responsibility for several attacks that have materialized since June, according to the U.S. military.

The United States invaded Iraq March 2003, alleging that then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction that were an imminent threat to American national security. The invasion catalyzed a long-standing sectarian conflict between the Sunni minority and the Shi’a majority. Approximately 5,000 troops worldwide have been killed, and the death toll of Iraqi civilians has been estimated at more than 100,000.

Sources: CNN.com, Reuters, July 11, Wall Street Journal, July 12

Please send comments to ekhoda@sandiego.edu
LIBYA

Gaddafi ready to leave according to France

France reported that it has had contacts with envoys from Muammar Gaddafi, who say that the Libyan leader is “prepared to leave.” French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé told French Radio July 12 that the “Libyan regime is sending messengers everywhere, to Turkey, to New York, to Paris” offering to discuss Gaddafi’s exit. Juppé was quick to add that such contacts from Gaddafi’s messengers did not constitute negotiations.

France has played a central role in launching NATO-led air strikes in Libya, under the UN-mandated mission to protect civilians. However, as the NATO campaign rages on with no end in sight, the French have realized that they cannot sustain the mission for long and have resorted to taking measures, such as airdropping weapons to the Libyan rebels, outside of the UN mandate. Gaddafi’s regime is still holding out in Tripoli and others parts of western Libya.

Juppé did not say who the emissaries were but reiterated, “We are receiving emissaries who are telling us: Gaddafi is prepared to leave. Let’s discuss it.”

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Bernard Valero said, “These are emissaries who say they are coming in the name of Gaddafi. What is important is that we send the same message and stay in close contact with our allies on this.”

The comments from the French Foreign Ministry come as the French parliament begins debate over the continuation of airstrikes in Libya. French Prime Minister Francois Fillon told the assembly of parliament that a political solution was “beginning to take shape” in Libya.

Many experts believe that Gaddafi’s preparation to step down might be blown out of proportion. However, the fact that the French (who are key players in the Libya campaign) are showing signs that the conflict could be heading towards a conclusion, is encouraging.

The rebels are currently holding eastern Libya and pockets in the west, with their main base in the city of Benghazi. Despite making progress, the rebels have so far not made any decisive advances towards the capital, where Gaddafi remains entrenched. France and the other NATO coalition countries have insisted that Gaddafi must step down before the negotiation process can commence.


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SYRIA

Pro-Government Mob Attacks US & French Embassy

Pro-government crowds attacked the U.S. and French Embassies July 11 to protest the visits of U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford and France’s Ambassador Eric Chevallier. These attacks had come in the face of rising anger from the Syrian government about supporting foreign leaders that promote the country’s pro-democracy, anti-regime protests.

The crowd at the U.S. Embassy managed to cross the perimeter wall and damage at least one part of the compound. They also managed to attack the residence of Ambassador Ford, though no one was harmed and his residence was not damaged.

Both ambassadors made surprise visits to the destabilized city of Hama last week, generating formal protests from the Syrian government and pro-government protests against the United States and France. Syria has said that the ambassadors are responsible for instigating the protests, though the pro-regime unrest had actually begun weeks prior.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was quick to cast judgment on the Syrian government’s meek response to the protestors’ attacks, contending that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has “lost legitimacy” as a leader interested in promoting democratic reform. In a joint news conference with European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, she stated, “From our perspective, he has lost legitimacy… He has failed to deliver on promises he has made, he has sought and accepted aid from the Iranians as to how to repress his own people.” U.S. President Barack Obama also criticized al-Assad, saying “he has missed opportunity after opportunity to present a genuine reform agenda.”

Anti-regime protests in Syria began March 2011 as part of what is now known as the “Arab Spring”, a movement of pro-democracy protests occurring all over the Middle East and North Africa. President Assad has since unleashed his security forces on these protestors, killing at least 1,300 civilians and arresting at least 12,000, according to several human rights groups. Many Western countries, including the United States, France, and Britain, have fiercely condemned the attacks and imposed more sanctions on government officials.


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YEMEN

Saleh finally appears on Television
President Ali Abdullah Saleh appeared on television July 7 for the first time since being badly burned in an attack on his palace in early June. Saleh has been in Saudi Arabia recovering from his wounds since June 6 following the attack, which Yemeni officials recently said was caused by a bomb planted in the president’s compound. Yemen has been rocked by months of unrest, with protestors calling for Saleh’s resignation. However, he has refused to step down and has resisted any kind of transition of power.

The President’s address aired on Yemen’s state TV and during his speech Saleh said that dialogue was needed to resolve his country’s problems. Saleh said that he was open to power-sharing, but stressed that it should be “within the framework of the constitution and in the framework of the law.” The embattled President also made reference to his injuries, stating that he had undergone “more than eight successful operations.” In addition Saleh offered encouragement to his supporters, amid growing turmoil and advances by al-Qaeda linked militants in parts of the country.

Saleh made no mention of a possible transition of power and urged his opponents to halt their protests. According to him, “Yemen’s people are defiant and will remain defiant against all challenges that threaten their stability and security, freedom and democracy.”

Hasan Zaid, leader of the opposition coalition known as the Joint Meeting Parties, said that Saleh’s speech was promising and “an introduction to positive steps.” Zaid interpreted the President’s address as a sign that Saleh was giving acting President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi authorization to take over. However, a leader in the youth-led protest movement, Khalid al-Anisi, was less optimistic about Saleh’s speech, describing it as “challenging.” According to al-Anisi, the speech showed Saleh’s blatant “neglect to demands of the people” and was not entirely convinced by the President’s message to the country.

Sources: BBC News, Bloomberg, July 7.

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SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

NEPAL

Nepali Congress won’t allow distributive budget

The Nepali Congress (NC) has told the government that it will not support a proposed new budget if it contains requirements to “indiscriminately” distribute funds in the name of conflict victims and cooperatives. During a meeting at the prime minister’s residence July 11 with top officials from the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN-Maoist) and Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), the NC asked if the government was allocating $130 million to pay compensation to the families of those killed during the conflict and urged the government not to make the budget distributive.
The NC does not want the government to “indiscriminately” distribute funds in the name of conflict victims and cooperatives. According to NC leader Naran Khadka, “We have clearly said we won’t support such a budget… we have also asked the government not to distribute funds in the name of cooperatives.” However, Finance Minister Bharatmohan Adhikari clarified that the budget does not intend to distribute a large amount as compensation.

Leaders of the NC asked the government to give continuity in the budget to the “good” programs initiated by the previous government, such as the Madhya Pahadi Highway, postal roads in the Terai (Nepali wetlands) and a fast track road linking Kathmandu with the Bara district (central south of Nepal). In addition, the NC asked the government when drafting the new budget to promote the private sector, prevent capital flight, promote non-agricultural sectors and address power insufficiency.

The NC leaders also requested that the government take measures in the new budget to check rising commodity prices and the all too common problem of corruption. NC leader Ram Sharan Mahat said that his party would not support the new budget if it tried to achieve “cheap popularity” and stated, “We will decide whether to protest the budget only after studying the content of the new budget.”

The deputy prime minister told the media after the meeting that the new budget was being brought about through consensus with the main opposition NC and the Madhes-based parties, and would focus on productive sectors. The prime minister’s chief advisor, Prakash Jwala stated that the government was preparing to present the new budget as a document of national consensus and said that the government had tried its best to incorporate the suggestions and demands of both the coalition partners and opposition parties.

Sources: myRepublica, July 11.

Sources: The Kathmandu Post, June 26; NepalNews, June 27; República, June 30.

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PHILIPPINES

Former governor’s bid to be state witness is rejected

The Department of Justice (DOJ) rejected suspended governor of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Zaldy Ampatuan’s bid to be a state witness in the November 2009 massacre of 32 journalists and the family of political opponent Esmael “Toto” Mangudadatu. Ampatuan’s father and brother have been accused of masterminding and leading the operation.

Justice Secretary Leila de Lima indicated that Ampatuan does not qualify as a state witness. “If you offer to become state witness, you should know about [the crime]. He’s saying now that he has
nothing to do with the massacre. That would be contradictory to our witnesses who pointed to his involvement in the planning stage,” she said.

The DOJ recognized that Ampatuan’s actions could be a way to avoid conviction and save family assets. However, Lima also suggested that should Ampatuan plead guilty to involvement in the 2009 murders, the DOJ might reconsider his offer to be a state witness.

Ampatuan’s lawyer, Redemberto Villanueva, has stated that his client does not want to become a state witness but does seek personal protection from the Witness Protection Program. “Zaldy wants to clarify that [he is not applying to become a state witness]. He just wants to cooperate with the government so that the public will know the truth. What we’re saying is that, as a witness, maybe the government can just give him protection,” Villanueva said.

The government had plans to research what Ampatuan would reveal about his family before deciding whether to admit Amputuan as a state witness. President Benigno Aquino stated that the government is not entering into a deal with Ampatuan, nor is there discussion about making him a state witness. “Because if you’re state witness you are being the least guilty, so you can be given immunity from suit. Then if there is immunity from suit, all of his cases will be gone, it becomes moot and academic,” Aquino said.

The ongoing violence in Mindanao is a result of the conflict between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government of the Philippines. The MILF have campaigned for an independent state separate from the Philippine government.

Sources: PhilStar, July 13; GMA News, July 12;

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**SRI LANKA**

**Tamil refugees refuse to leave boat unless their safety is guaranteed**

Indonesian officials have detained a group of Tamil refugees attempting to sail to New Zealand. The group of 87 Tamils aboard the MV Alicia has refused to leave their boat, anchored off the coast of Indonesia, unless their safety can be guaranteed.

Indonesian maritime police discovered the boat carrying the Tamil refugees July 9 when it developed mechanical difficulties at sea. The maritime police escorted the vessel to the port of Tanjung Pinang, Riau Island. The refugees have indicated that they were from northern Sri Lanka and were trapped in fighting of the final months of the war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan government. They had been living in Malaysia for the past two years.

According to Hasan Basri, the head of the Tanjung Pinang immigration office, the group of Sri Lankan refugees asked to speak with representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and requested to be settled in New Zealand, Australia or Canada. “It's a difficult
situation because we cannot force them to get off the ship, but we also cannot let them leave,” Basri said.

However, New Zealand Immigration Minister Jonathon Coleman indicated that it was doubtful the Sri Lankans on board the MV Alicia were headed for New Zealand based on evidence gathered from the boat. “Obviously, if they could create a wave of political pressure to come here, I'm sure they would be pretty keen to get to somewhere but look, they won't be coming to New Zealand,” said Coleman.

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key stated that accepting this group of refugees would encourage people smuggling and other illegal activities. “Once you start taking people in the form of people smugglers, you are rewarding the bad guys,” he said. Key also indicated that refugees entering the country in a legal manner would be welcomed. “There are literally millions of people in this category. It's not a simple thing to just say 'let's take this boat in and be good citizens,” Key said.

Sri Lanka was embroiled in a twenty-six-year ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and Hindu Tamil minority. The Tamil Tigers were defeated by government troops in 2009. An estimated 100,000 people died in the conflict and thousands are still missing.

Sources: BBC, July 11; Stuff, July 12

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CENTRAL AND EAST AFRICA

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Plane Crash kills 75; cholera spreads to Kinshasa

On July 8 a Hewa Bora Airways plane crashed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The crash was first reported to have killed 90 people, but the number was lowered July 13 by DRC officials to 75. The flight took off from Kinshasa and was chartered to land in Goma, near the Rwandan border. The scheduled stop in Kisangani, a north-eastern city, before reaching the final destination was where the Boeing 747 encountered heavy rainfall and generally bad weather.

The aircraft had 118 people onboard. Thirty-six, including two children and an army general, were pulled from the wreck by rescuers. Other passengers rescued died on the way to one of two local hospitals. Among those who perished in the crash were a Catholic bishop and three men who were to referee a national soccer league match on July 10.

On June 10, government spokesperson Lambert Mende announced a national three-day mourning for the victims of the crash.
The DRC also faces the continued spread of cholera. The United Nations has reported more than 3,000 cases of the deadly disease in the DRC, with 192 deaths in March. The first cases were reported in Kisangani, and were said to have spread via traders down the Congo River. Cases have been reported in the north and west provinces of Equateur and Bandundu, and in Kinshasa.

In order to combat the spreading disease, the World Health Organization is working with the government on water cleaning programs and hygiene promotion campaigns, as well as treating for free those already infected. Once contracted, cholera quickly becomes dangerous, threatening the patient with severe dehydration. The disease is a challenge in many countries across the world, where clean water is not available to the majority of the population.

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KENYA

Somali refugee crisis continues in Dadaab

Somalia and the eastern part of Kenya have not had rain for almost two years. On July 14 rain fell. However, Kenyan refugee camps are still faced with the struggle to provide for those affected by Africa’s worst drought in sixty years.

With thousands of refugees going to the camps in Dadaab, Kenya, the head of the United Nations refugee agency has been putting pressure on the Kenyan government to proceed with the opening of a new refugee camp. At 50 sq km, the camp is one of the largest refugee facilities in Africa. It was built in 2009, to accommodate up to 90,000 displaced persons, but is currently assisting more than 370,000 people. Families’ livelihoods have died with their livestock, and food and water at the camp are scarce.

Fortunately, the Kenyan government decided July 14 to permit the opening of a second camp, Ifo II. Prime Minister Raila Odinga, stated: “Although we consider our own security, we can’t turn away the refugees.” The new camp is equipped with permanent shelters and more sanitary conditions. The government had previously resisted opening the Somali-Kenyan border camp for fear that it would attract even more Somali refugees to Kenya.

The Prime Minister did make it clear that Kenya would not be responsible for opening the camp, and that they would leave it up to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to move the refugees. The World Food Program also stated that they are looking to expand in Somalia.

The conditions in the first refugee camp, which has overstretched its capacity with almost half a million people, are tragic and chaotic. Malnourished and underweight children and babies have been the worst affected by the drought and are the most vulnerable to diseases and infections. Workers from Médecins Sans Frontières and Oxfam International are overwhelmed by the numbers of sick
and dying, and struggle to provide Somali mothers with hope that they will be able to save their children.

Kenya has been subject to pressure not only from the UN, but also Médecins Sans Frontières. The international aid agency urged Kenya and other agencies involved in the crisis to begin immediate relocation of refugees from Dadaab to Ifo II. The Kenyan government had previously refused to authorize the finalization of the Ifo II camp despite the thousands of refugees still fleeing Somalia’s drought and war. The Ifo II camp is located only 10 kilometers from Dadaab where tens of thousands of Somalis are living in poor and unacceptable conditions.

According to the Kenyan Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA), the government did not give its official approval for the completion of Ifo II, and as recently as last week declined to open the camp despite two years of pressure from the international community. The Kenyan government had resisted encouragement from the UN and other aid agencies to open the camp, fearing Somali refugees would consider it a permanent place to stay.

An Oxfam International representative, Alan McDonald, stated that by keeping refugees out of the empty camp, the government was making it more difficult for aid agencies to help the people affected by the drought and war. Aid agencies had also identified opening the new camp as a way to reduce building tensions between the refugees and local people living in and around Dadaab. McDonald referred to the refusal of the Ifo II camp to Somali refugees arriving in Kenya after weeks of foodless travel as “scandalous.”

Sources: BBC: July 8, July 14; CNN: July 11, July 13; Think Africa: June 20; Global Spin: July 13.

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SUDAN

Republic of Sudan:
Abyei region still contested; UN official released in Darfur

With South Sudan having become independent July 9, Sudan faces the issue of making official the border between the two countries. The border state of South Kordofan continues to be volatile. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) due to bombings in South Kordofan in the last month is 73,000. The largest humanitarian concerns for this large group of IDPs are food, water, shelter and medical attention. Aid workers have also identified the need to clear mines from roadways as critical to safety.

The fighting in the border regions of South Kordofan and Abyei intensified during June. In an attempt to demilitarize the area, the two countries signed an agreement June 28 to allow Ethiopian peacekeepers in. This border conflict continued to threaten the relationship between the newly
separate countries upon South Sudan’s independence. President Bashir said that peaceful relations with South Sudan are dependent on respect for borders and not interfering in each other's affairs.

The United Nations is working toward completing the deployment of the UN Interim Security Forces to Abyei.

Also in Sudan, authorities have freed a United Nations employee who was being held in Darfur. Hawa Abdall Mohamed, member of the UN and African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was one of two UN employees arrested May 6 in Darfur. Mohamed was released in Khartoum. Mohamed’s co-captive Idriss Abdeirahman was arrested in April, and is still imprisoned in the South Darfur city of Nyala.

Ibrahim Gambari, head of UNAMID, called for the release of the two UN employees June 11. He stated that the arrest and detention of the UN staff members, who have immunity from charges made against them while performing official duties, goes against the Status of Forces Agreement signed February 9, 2008 between UNAMID and the Sudanese government.

Sources: Enough: July 13; International Crisis Group: July 9; UN News: July 12, July 13; BBC: July 13.

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SOUTH SUDAN

Republic of South Sudan:
United Nations admits 193th member state

The United Nations General Assembly admitted the Republic of South Sudan as the body's 193rd member state July 14. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the newly independent country, saying: “Together, let us say to the citizens of our newest Member State: You now sit with us. We stand with you.”

Other United Nations (UN) members commented that this was a historic moment for Africa and that they were certain South Sudan would help promote the UN’s mission and goals of friendship, peace and security.

Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, Rick Machar Teny-Dhurgon, stated, “We are working to accede as quickly as possible to all relevant international conventions and treaties, not least those related to human rights.” He also noted that the new country would remain committed to the terms of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, with special attention being paid to the Abyei region.
The United Nations Security Council recommended to the general body July 13 that the Republic of South Sudan be admitted as the 193rd member of the body. Resolution 1996 was adopted by the Committee on the Admission of New Members without a vote after the committee reviewed the application submitted by the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir.

This month’s rotating council president; German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said to the 15-member committee, “We look forward to the Republic of South Sudan joining us as a member of the United Nations and to working closely with its representatives.”

The Security Council also received a briefing from the United Nation’s new mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The mission was established the week after South Sudanese independence with 7,000 military personnel and 900 civilian police. UNMISS aims to help the new nation with long term state building and economic development.

Newly independent South Sudan has enjoyed a multitude of independence celebrations, but now turns attention to state building. The central focus for the country is on government and the constitution. The transition period, presided over by a transitional government that took office on Independence Day July 9, is to produce a permanent constitution. The UN has also pledged to help the fledgling nation in the areas of health and education. Ban Ki-moon stated, “Like any newborn, South Sudan needs help.”

Sources: International Crisis Group: July 9; UN News: July 13, July 13, July 14.

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