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Zimbabwe: United States Sanctions Not Lifted; Billionaire Announces “New Philanthropic Venture”

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Colombia: Investigations of Members of Congress Continue
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 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego.*

*The interns during the fall 2010 semester are:*

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LATIN AMERICA

Colombia: Investigations of Members of Congress Continue

The political climate in Colombia, as President Juan Manuel Santos begins his term in office, is
rife with allegations, investigations and official rulings that continue to draw attention to the
former government. On August 7, Santos took office following Alvaro Uribe who served from
2002 until 2010. Uribe’s government has been praised by many U.S. officials including
President Barack Obama.

Over the past two years, more than 80 members of congress have been investigated for ties to
paramilitary groups in what is termed the “parapolitics scandal.” Of those associated with Uribe,
ex-congressman Ruben Dario Quintero was convicted by the Supreme Court on Monday for his
ties to para-military groups. Immediately following his conviction, former congressman Jesús
Doval was arrested for similar charges at his home in Apartadó, Antioquia.

A preliminary investigation has also begun of Felipe Muñoz, director of the Colombian
intelligence agency Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS), for his role in illegal
wire tapping of government critics. This scandal emerged in 2009 and is alleged to have direct
ties to Uribe’s government. In a joint publication from Washington released in June of this year,
it is stated that “the DAS targets read like a Who’s Who of Colombia’s foremost human rights
groups.”

Liberal Party senator Piedad Córdoba has been barred from holding public office for 18 years by
Inspector General Alejandro Ordonez for having ties to the guerrilla group Fuerzas Armadas
Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The ruling follows a dismissal of the same evidence by
the prosecutor general in early August. Córdoba is the President of “Colombians for Peace,” an
organization focused on negotiating a peace agreement to end 45 years of protracted conflict in
the country. Over the past several years, Córdoba has been instrumental in negotiating the release
of hostages held by FARC and last year, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Córdoba
has also had a lasting and public relationship with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and has been vocal about her views on the importance of creating a relationship between the countries. Cordoba has consistently criticized the Colombian government and has advocated for the cessation of human rights abuses by security forces in the country.

Sources: www.colombiareports.com; www.bbc.co.uk; www.bloomberg.com

Guatemala: US Apologizes for Past Experiments

On October 1, U.S. President Barack Obama called Guatemalan president Alvaro Colom to apologize for U.S. medical tests that were conducted more than 60 years ago. From 1946 until 1948 the US Public Health Service conducted a series of syphilis and gonorrhea studies in Guatemala. The program infected almost 700 Guatemalan prisoners and mental health patients with the diseases.

Professor Susan Reverby at Wellesley College discovered the programs and has released a statement claiming the Guatemalan government gave permission for the tests. She has also stated that patients were unaware of the experiments. In an interview with the BBC, President Colom referred to the infected patients as “victims of rights abuses.”

The White House has responded with a joint statement from Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. They said: "Although these events occurred more than 64 years ago, we are outraged that such reprehensible research could have occurred under the guise of public health. We deeply regret that it happened, and we apologize to all the individuals who were affected by such abhorrent research practices.”

Syphilis and gonorrhea can have a range of serious health effects if not treated properly. Although patients were treated for the sexually transmitted diseases following infection, as many as 70 patients died as a result of the testing. The United States has promised an investigation.

Sources: www.bbc.co.uk; www.guatemala-times.com

US President Barack Obama calls Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom to apologize for US Public Health Service tests in Guatemala in the 1940’s.
SOUTH ASIA:

Nepal's opposition Maoists continued their antigovernment protests in Kathmandu in May, calling for the prime minister to resign (Wall Street Journal - World)

Nepal: Deadlock Continues

The deadlock in government formation in Nepal is expected to persist. The election of a new prime minister requires the majority vote which comprises 301 votes of the 601 members in the Constituent Assembly. Until now, the majority vote has yet to be granted to any political party. In June 2010, Communist Party of Nepal (UML) leader Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned his position as prime minister in a televised address after the deadline to form a consensus government passed without an agreement. The resignation was confirmed as a part of a “three point deal” between the three major parties in the Constituent Assembly: the Nepali Congress, UML, and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (UCPN-Maoist) Party.

The “Three Point Deal” attempts to negotiate on three key issues: taking the peace process to a logical end, writing the constitution, and power sharing. Meanwhile, central issues have been put on hold, most importantly the writing of the new constitution and army integration and rehabilitation programs. Access to food, jobs, clean water, and a reliable infrastructure continue to be de-prioritized in the country.

Elections within the Constitutional Assembly were expected to take place on September 26, 2010. However, the recent withdrawal of Maoist candidate, Pushpa Kamal Dahal known as “Prachanda,” leaves the election with only one candidate, Nepali Congress candidate, Ram Chandra Poudel. As a result of this, it is likely the coming election date will be extended until a new nominee is selected. If elections occur and the deadlock is broken, the Nepali Constituent Assembly will be forced to address the nation’s most crucial issues in order to achieve democratic consolidation.
Sources: unmin.org and myrepublica.org
SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Philippines: Government and Mindanao Rebels Draw One Step Closer to Peace Talks

It has been almost two years since the November 2008 verdict by the Supreme Court in the Philippines, which ruled a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) to be unconstitutional. However, since the inauguration of President Benigno Aquino in June 2010, the Philippine government has made clear its intention to re-establish peace talks with the Bangsmoro and Indigenous populations on the southern island of Mindanao.

September has proven to be a month of progress towards this goal. In early September, Aquino announced his intention to retain Malaysia as facilitator in the peace talks between the Government of the Republic of Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF hailed this pronouncement and considers it a bilateral decision. Since this declaration, both the GRP and the MILF have announced their negotiating panels.

President Aquino’s panel is chaired by lawyer Marvic Leonen, Dean of the University of the Philippines. His appointment is supported by MILF in their belief that his experience and knowledge in the issues and rights of indigenous peoples will be of benefit to the negotiations. The panel also includes former Secretary of Agriculture Senen Bacani, University of Philippines political science professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, and Ramon Piang Sr., Vice Mayor of Upi, a town in the central region of Mindanao. The fifth member is rumored to be Dr. Hamid Barra, the former Secretary of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This appointment is asserted on the MILF website, luwaran.com, in an article in which MILF claims that they were informed by a source inside Aquino’s government.

MILF announced that its panel would retain three senior members who were involved in the previous peace panels. This list includes Mohagher Iqbal as chair of the panel (Iqbal has served as chair since July 2003), Datu Mastura, and Maulana Alonto. In addition, the panel has seated two new members, Addullah Camlian and Professor Adhoud Syed Lingga. Camlian is a former member of MILF peace panel’s technical committee and a native of Basilan (an island on the Sulu Archipelago) and Linga is the executive director of the Institute for Bangsmoro studies. Both additions are expected to represent the views of native Muslims and Indigenous peoples within the country.

Both sides are hoping to resume Peace Talks before November.
Sources: Mindanews.com, Luwaran.com, Associated Press
WEST AFRICA:

Liberia: Ex-warlord, Prince Johnson, in Presidential Race
There is some discussion about former warlord, Prince Johnson, participating in the Liberian presidential elections next year. Currently, Mr. Johnson is an elected senator for Nimba County, one of the areas in Liberia most affected during its ten year civil war.

A few weeks ago, Johnson and his party were told that he may compete in the polls. Since then, there have been mixed views on allowing him on the ballot because some, like Liberian journalist Nyekeh Forkpa, say the “scars from the war remain too fresh.”

Johnson is most known for the torture and murder of then-president Samuel K. Doe in 1990. The event was caught on tape and shows Johnson drinking beer as he ordered his men to cut off Doe's ears.

Additionally, last spring, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that Johnson be banned from holding any public office for thirty years. He told the BBC that he shouldn’t be considered a warlord, and shouldn’t be treated any differently than other generals who have fought in a war to “liberate people from an oppressive regime.” He added, “General de Gaulle was a general who was involved in warfare but he became president who was elected by his people. You get Franklin D. Roosevelt, you get General Eisenhower… Liberia is no exception.”

Prince Johnson is running against Liberia’s current president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa’s first elected female leader, and George Weah, a former soccer player, in November 2011.


EAST AFRICA:

Kenya: Government States it is Committed to the ICC

Foreign Affairs Minister Moses Wetangula stated in a speech on October 4th that the government of Kenya is committed to the proceedings of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Wetangula said, “it is the right of any potential suspect to involve their lawyers when recording statements
to protect their fundamental human rights which is acceptable under the Constitution.”

He also defended the government against accusation of derailing the work of the ICC in the country and said it was still committed to pursuing the masterminds of the 2007/2008-post election violence. The accusation come in the backdrop of the Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Mutula Kilonzo’s statement on Sunday Nation that Kenya police and the judiciary have sufficient capacity to deal with suspects responsible for the chaos that followed the controversial 2007/2008 general elections.

Wetangula spoke during celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of the German Unification day in Nairobi, which commemorates the day East, and West Germany came together. German Ambassador Margit Hellwig-Boette appealed to government not to backtrack on its commitment to the ICC process. “I am very happy about the explanation the Foreign Minister just gave that the Kenyan government is committed to cooperation with ICC, this is the sign we all needed because from my experience in this country and the travels I have made, I understand that the victims of post election violence want something to be done about impunity,” she said.

The ICC team arrived in Kenya last week to investigate suspected Crimes against Humanity committed during the 2007/2008-post election crisis. The Kenyan government has promised full commitment. What remains to be seen is if they will live up to their word.

Source: Capital News, October 4, 2010

SOUTHERN AFRICA:

South Africa: Government Withdraws Dispensation Given to Immigrants, Urges Them to “Regularize” Their Situation.

A special dispensation given to undocumented immigrants will come to an end in South Africa on December 31. In April of 2009, a special government “dispensation” allowed Zimbabweans the right to
reside in South Africa without documentation. Nonetheless, in September, the South African government
outstretched a hand to Zimbabwe nationals living in South Africa, offering the opportunity to “regularize”
their stay in South Africa by acquiring proper documentation. The documentation and amnesty process
will take place from September 20, 2010 to December 31, 2010. The Department of Home Affairs is
prepared to increase its number of officials depending on the number of Zimbabweans applying for
documents.

The South African government has emphasized its commitment to extend amnesty to all
immigrants who possess false South African identity documents on the condition that they hand these
fraudulent documents back to their home affairs regional offices. Immigrants have been urged to
approach the embassy in Pretoria and consulate in Johannesburg to declare their presence, thereby
obtaining valid travel documents and enabling the South African government to issue them study, work,
or business permits. The process will be facilitated with the deployment of 240 home affairs officials to
46 regional offices across the nation. South Africa, according to case specialist Patrick O’neil, has long
received immigrants from its poorer neighbors. The flow has increased after the end of apartheid, and as a
result of the crisis in neighboring Zimbabwe, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of new immigrants has
increased the already estimated 3 to 5 million who reside mostly in South Africa illegally, finding
employment in the informal sector. The growing presence of immigrants has caused resentment among
South Africans and in a 2008 wave of anti-immigrant violence which stunned the nation, dozens of
immigrants were killed and foreign shops destroyed. Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
stated that the process is “aimed at ensuring that Zimbabweans comply with South Africa’s immigration
laws, and lead normal lives while ending their misery of living under constant fear of deportation”

Sources: mailandguradian.com

Zimbabwean immigrant crosses South African Border by crawling through a hole in a border fence
Once considered the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe faces difficult challenges. The nation has experienced the highest hyperinflation rates the world has seen. The country’s unemployment rate is currently 90%. Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe, is notorious for the repression of political opponents.

In a recent issue of The Economist, Morgan Tsvangirai, Zimbabwe’s prime minister, spoke of his thawing relationship with the president. He mentions 18 months of coalition rule, cautious economic recovery, and whether lifting sanctions against Mr. Mugabe and his allies would be beneficial. The western sanctions have been a result of human rights violations since Mugabe’s Zanu-PF party won elections in 2000 and engaged in a violent campaign of land re-distributions.

A report released in Mail and Guardian on September 27 stated: "As long as human rights violations, land seizures, and intimidation of those participating in the political process continue, the sanctioned individuals and entities on the list who continue to perpetrate and benefit from these acts are unlikely to be removed.” In other words, unless greater respect for human rights and political freedoms improve, sanctions will stay.

Although challenges for Zimbabwe continue, on September 20, the New York Times reported that Richard Branson, the billionaire founder of the Virgin Group, is announcing “its new philanthropic venture that aims to do nothing less than put Zimbabwe back on its feet.” While others see Zimbabwe in socioeconomic disarray, Branson sees potential. A year ago, Branson quietly established Enterprise Zimbabwe with the Nduna Foundation and Humanity United, an organization supported by Pam Omidyar, wife of the founder of eBay. “Most kids now have schoolbooks, and hospitals now are open as nurses are getting paid.”
Enterprise Zimbabwe hopes to attract more funding for its goals, including the support of local businesses. The project had its official debut on September 21st before one of the biggest gatherings of billionaires and other wealthy individuals participating in the Clinton Global Initiative. Despite Zimbabwe’s political and socio-economic situation, the increasing attention for investment in the region has created a sense of hope for native Zimbabweans.

Sources: mailandguardian.com; nytimes.com