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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 2012 term are:*  

**Jorge Benavides (University of San Diego), Andres Bernal (University of San Diego, School of Leadership and Education Sciences), Elisabeth Jelinek (University of San Diego), and Erinn King (Georgia State University, Atlanta, B.A. 2012)**
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COLOMBIA

President Santos recovers from cancer surgery while social unrest persists

After having been diagnosed with a malignant tumor, President Juan Manuel Santos underwent prostate cancer surgery October 3. According to his medical team the surgery required only local anesthetics and was successful without the need for chemo or radio therapy. Santos will continue to assume his duties although he will not be allowed to travel while he recovers at home with his family.

The department of Antioquia has seen 83 assassinations of human rights activists along with 111 death threats and 37 victims of displacement in the last 33 months. These numbers, released by Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Éstados Unidos, show that from 2010 to September of 2012 they have been part of 379 acts of aggression, including murder and displacement, concentrated in the metropolitan region followed by the municipality of Urabá. According to the press release, what is most worrying to human rights organizations is impunity. In Antioquia, after the murder of 17 individuals reclaiming lands, there were only three arrests made; two of those arrested were later released. The director of the human rights organization Forjando Futuros has asked the government to undertake an initiative to release the names of those depriving residents of land and displacing them. He has also called for a prohibition on importing arms and weapons into those territories.

In the Department of Sucre, 150 families demanding housing occupied close to an acre of a ranch house belonging to former Sucre governor Miguel Angel Nule, who has been linked with paramilitary forces, and whose sons were detained for financial irregularities and corruption on million dollar public projects contracts. “We are here not as invaders but taking possession of these lands which nobody uses,” said Roberto Garay, one of the occupiers. The Office of The Ombudsman in Sincelejo, Sucre’s capital, estimates a deficit in housing of about 25,000.

These social issues come as land reform and poverty reduction are among the top priorities on the agenda for peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, taking place in Oslo this month.

Sources: BBC, October 3; El Tiempo, October 2; El Tiempo, October 2, 2012. By Andres Bernal. Please send all comments to abernal@sandiego.edu.
GUATEMALA

Indigenous women organize against corporate development while President makes his case at the United Nations

In Guatemala the current development model of extraction and enclaves has impacted the lives of indigenous communities and women. “In the struggle to defend our territory, our natural resources, what’s at stake is our very existence,” says Miriam Pixtun of the Indigenous Women’s Movement Tz’ununija. The Sinergia No’j, T’zununija, Just Associates (JASS), Uk’Ux B’e, Unit of Guatemalan Human Rights Defenders (UDEFEGUA), Association for Feminist Studies (AMEF) and The National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG) joined forces and held a meeting last month with over 40 women from around the country titled, “Women in Defense of Water, Life and Territory.”

According to the alliance, the mega development projects carried out by multinational corporations in their communities have resulted in poverty and disease along with degradation of their environmental ecosystems with the use of pesticides, chemical compounds, and other pollutants. The organizers maintained that some of the achievements of the gathering include the creation of a space for recognizing and strengthening the peaceful struggle in defense of territory, natural resources, a discussion of alternatives, and the effort to build cross-border alliances spreading information on the effects of megaprojects.

Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina has stepped up military security forces in order to combat drug cartels while simultaneously making a case at the UN for an international legalization of drugs. Pérez Molina expressed his discontent with the traditional war on drugs stating that its inability to deal with American consumption leaves Central America with no choice but to pursue legalization.

In order to battle drug cartels, Pérez Molina is adding the creation of two new military bases, as many as 2,500 troops, and a treaty allowing 200 U.S. Marines to patrol the western coast. Currently Guatemala faces a military aid ban resulting from atrocities committed by the army during the country’s civil war, along with the Leahy Act which prevents the United States from training people suspected of having committed human rights violations.

In order for the U.S. to resume military aid to Guatemala, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton must certify that the Guatemalan military is recognizing and respecting international human rights and cooperating with judicial investigations of former military personnel. The president also plans to increase the national police by 10,000, ostensibly allowing the military to focus on securing the borders and fighting drug trafficking. This comes as Guatemala continues to experience internal difficulties with economic development as well as drug related security and civil unrest.

Sources: AP, Sept 25; Voxxi, October 2, 2012.

By Andres Bernal. Please send all comments to abernal@sandiego.edu.
HAITI

Thousands Gather in Capital for Anti-Government Protest

The streets of Port-au-Prince swarmed with demonstrators September 30 in protest of the government because of its failures to improve Haitians’ standard of living. Indeed, following the devastating earthquake that rocked the island nation in 2010 current president Michel Martelly ran his campaign on rebuilding the country, but more than two years after the disaster there remain people in the capital who are still living in tents and other makeshift homes.

Protestors voiced public concerns by emphasizing the cost of living, rising food prices and corruption of the government. Some of the youths in the crowds expressed their indignation by brandishing red cards, signaling that the government had committed fouls.

The protest coincided with the 21st anniversary of the ousting of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest and advocate of social justice. During his first term Aristide launched a reform campaign that angered the established elite and resulted in a military coup. Although he returned to power in 1994 and finished his first mandate in 1996, Aristide’s 2000 re-election term lasted until mass protests broke out in 2004, which resulted in his seven-year exile. Since his return to Haiti in 2011, Aristide has maintained a low profile but remains popular among his supporters.

Sources: CBS, October 1; AFP, October 1; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012.

By Jorge Benavides. Please send all comments to jbenavides@sandiego.edu.

SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

NEPAL

Fringe party declares ban on Indian vehicles, films and music

Following growing concerns over Indian influence on domestic affairs a minority fringe party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), CPN(M), decided to declare a ban on vehicles with Indian license plates as well as Hindi films and music from India that in its view portray Nepal in a negative light. Although the CPN(M) is not in a position of authority, the declaration can be seen as the voicing of the party’s dissent from mainstream cooperation with India.

Indeed, the move is widely regarded as a nationalist attempt by the CPN (M) to establish its legitimacy in the country, but public opinion has been against the policy. This has led the party to
modify the declaration by slightly relaxing the ban, stating that they would allow vehicles that carry gasoline and medicine to enter the country, but otherwise keeping the ban intact.

The CPN (M) has justified the ban by claiming that individual agricultural imports from India are disrupting prices and, furthermore, by arguing that Bollywood films often portray Nepali people in roles of servitude, which they maintain incites ethnic tension.

The ruling party, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), UCPN (M), has on the other hand denounced the declaration because it is trying to advocate further cooperation with India. It emphasizes the fact that India is Nepal’s largest trading partner, constituting two-thirds of foreign trade, and that its cultural ties to Nepal should facilitate collaboration.

For its part, the UCPN (M) has tried to set up a conference of the Nepal India Joint-Commission, an institution created in 1991 to streamline dialogue between the two nations. Both countries have instructed their foreign secretaries to arrange for the meeting but no official agenda has been set.

Sources: AFP, September 26; The Hindu, October 1; Hindustan Times, September 26; Kathmandu Post, September 30, 2012.

By Jorge Benavides. Please send all comments to jbenavides@sandiego.edu.

SRI LANKA

Solutions are needed as Sri Lanka Closes Last Displacement Camp

Menik Farm, the last remaining displacement camp for Sri Lankans displaced by the civil war was closed September 25. The government opened the 700-hectare plot in northern Sri Lanka’s Vavuniya district as an internally displaced person (IDP) site in 2009 and, at its peak, it held 225,000 people. While the closing is considered a UN milestone, the exiting inhabitants need a solution regarding where they will now settle, as well as their legal rights to previously owned land.

Approximately 346 people from Kepapilavu in the Mullaitivu district in northern Sri Lanka are unable to return to their original homes, because the military continues to occupy the area. “The government is looking for solutions but it is important that the displaced people should be able to make an informed and voluntary decision about their future including being part of the planning and management of their resettlement,” said UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sri Lanka, Subinay Nandy.

Some IDPs will benefit from an Indian funded housing project for displaced Tamils launched October 1. The plan is to build brand new homes for 43,000 Sri Lankans displaced due to the civil war. Under the plan, beneficiaries receive payments in installments based on progress with each
The beneficiaries have been selected and it is unknown whether any of the IDPs selected come from Menik Farm.

For now, the group of over 300 people from newly closed IDP site will be relocated on state-owned land. They must wait to hear if they will be able to return home and if not, whether they will receive compensation from the government. Though tents and food rations are provided on the relocation site, facilities are limited. “Some people are here with the clothes they wear and little else,” said Sivaguru Angaramuttu Udalayakumari, a 43-year-old IDP relocated from Menik Farm. “We have just been brought here. There are no facilities in this cattle shed.”

The Sri Lankan civil war lasted from 1983 – 2009, during which approximately 80,000 people were killed, mostly in the final months of the conflict. The war ended when the Sri Lanka government defeated the separatist insurgency known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in September 2009. Large numbers of Sri Lankans were living as IDPs, especially in the country’s north, when the war ended.


By Erinn King. Send comments to erinnking@gmail.com.

MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA

SYRIA
Conflict continues, UNESCO site burns and government blames West

The armed conflict in Syria remains ongoing. President Bashir Al-Assad’s government is using its military might to crack down on rebel groups, notably the Free Syrian Army, which it views as a terrorist organization. In a speech at the United Nations, Syria’s foreign minister Walid Muallem accused the United States, France and Turkey of providing arms, financing and personnel to terrorists.

The ongoing conflict has continued to escalate, intruding more and more into the civilian arena. In fact, fighting in Syria’s second city of Aleppo led to a fire and subsequent destruction of the city’s bazaar, a UNESCO world heritage site. This is in addition to the mass exodus, estimated to be between two and three thousand, of refugees that leave the country every month. Emigration at this rate places the projected number of Syrian refugees at 700,000 for the year, the equivalent of all global refugees in 2011. Hence the multitudes of people leaving Syria are contributing to a record number of global refugees in the 21st century according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
For its part the West has continued to denounce the military crackdown by the Syrian government. U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, announced an additional $45 million in humanitarian assistance to the country, bringing the combined total of official U.S. aid to $130 million since the conflict began.

Sources: Albawaba News, September 29; France 24, October 01; NBC News, October 2; The New American, October 01, 2012.

By Jorge Benavides. Please send all comments to jbenavides@sandiego.edu.

EASTERN EUROPE

MOLDOVA

Moldova Remains Unfazed by Russia’s Energy Ultimatum

September 12, Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat tried to negotiate lower gas prices with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and President Vladimir Putin while visiting the former Soviet superpower. Russia refused to discuss the issue of gas price cuts unless Moldova agreed to denounce a protocol on adhering to the Europe Energy Community Agreement. Because Moldova lacks energy as a natural resource, it has traditionally relied on Russia for gasoline. The Europe Energy Community Agreement would give Moldova more trading opportunities with the EU and reduce Moldova’s political dependence on Russia.

The Europe Third Energy Package would also affect Russian gas giant Gazprom, which forbids a company to both supply and transport gas at the same company. The package forces Gazprom to sell part of its gas infrastructure in Moldova. Russia has contested the package since January and currently seeks legal action to avoid it. Thus, when Filat requested lower gas prices at their last meeting, the Russian Energy Minister responded with an ultimatum. He urged Moldova not to adhere to the Europe Third Energy Package and stated that this was a precondition to discuss the issue of gas price cuts and the relief of debt, which now amounts to $4.1 billion.

Russia’s request was met with opposition. ‘Moldova’s European integration course cannot be negotiated,” Moldovan President Nicolae Timofti said on September 17th. Filat, however, said Moldova can offer Gazprom guarantees concerning the protection of its investments even if Moldova joins the European energy community. With plans forming for Moldova’s accession to the European Union, Lucinda Creighton, Minister of State for European Affairs for the Republic of Ireland, told Moldovan leaders September 20 that Ireland hoped their country would initiate a vital association agreement and free trade deal with Brussels in the first half of 2013.

Sources: Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, Reuters, September 12; The Irish Times, September 21; SETimes, September 26, 2012. By Erinn King. Please send all comments to erinnking@gmail.com.
EAST AFRICA

KENYA

Government Denounces Waititu Hate-Speech

Water Assistant Minister and Embasaki MP Ferdinand Waititu was arrested for “hate speech” and inciting violence against ethnic Maasai in Kayole, which is located in North Nairobi and part of the Embasaki division.

After a Maasai security guard allegedly killed a street boy for stealing a chicken September 24, Waititu gave a speech which was recorded by Kenya National Television and later posted on YouTube. In his speech, Waititu said, “We don’t want to see any Maasai here in Kayole,” and called for all employers of Maasai to fire them immediately.

Following Waititu’s remarks, the crowd began attacking members of the community and destroying property. A revenge attack, which resulted in the killing of a guard and the serious injury of another Maasai also occurred after the minister’s speech.

Director of Public Prosecutions Keriako Tobiko ordered Waititu’s arrest. The Kenyan government is particularly wary of hate-speech because it is working to prevent a repeat of the violent 2007 elections, which resulted in The International Criminal Court (ICC) charging four Kenyans with crimes against humanity for masterminding the tribal violence that killed more than 1,200 people. Attorney General Githu Muigai stated, “the government wants to send a strong message that nobody, no matter how high or low, will escape the full force of the law on this matter of hate-speech.”

Hours before his arrest Waititu apologized, stating his remarks were aimed at foreigners threatening law and order in Embasaki. He claims his remarks are being politicized.

Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, one of the four Kenyans charged by the ICC, disowned Waititu, who is one of his ardent supporters. Uhuru said The National Alliance Party of Kenya (TNA) believes in unity, and if Waititu supports TNA he should apologize both to the Maasai and to all of Kenya.

The new constitution, signed in 2010, requires any minister charged with an offense to step down.

Waititu is the second minister charged with inciting violence in two weeks. Assistant Livestock Minister Dhadho Godana was arrested September 12 for inciting violence in a dispute over land and water in Kenya’s coastal region. More than 100 people were killed in the incident.

Sources: All Africa, September 24; RTT News, September 25; All Africa, September 26; VOA, September 27; Chicago Tribune, September 27, 2012.
SOUTH SUDAN

Situation Worsens in Yida Refugee Settlement

Food shortages and renewed fighting between rebel SPLA-N and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in the Nuba Mountains are driving more refugees to the already packed Yida settlement, located in the South Sudanese border state of South Kordofan.

The conflict in South Kordofan began June 2011 after controversial gubernatorial races. Sudan has recently increased its bombing raids, often hitting civilian areas and damaging crops. The increase is thought to be partly to discourage the implementation of a humanitarian agreement that would allow aid deliveries to the rebel-controlled South Kordofan region.

Since February, the population has grown from 17,000 to 65,000 refugees. With the new influx of approximately 100 refugees per day, the population is estimated to reach 80,000 by the end of the year.

The UN Security Council said in a statement that it is concerned about the “rapidly worsening humanitarian situation” in the Yida camps. Flooding from recent rains has closed off roads, forcing entities like the World Food Program to turn to air drops to supply the region with much needed supplies. Two of every 10,000 refugees die per day, mainly from malnourishment, malaria and diarrhea. Sixteen fatalities in a recent Hepatitis E outbreak in the Upper Nile raise new concerns.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is concerned about the safety of the settlement. The Yida camp’s location in a militarized border area close to a conflict zone is dangerous.

The UNHCR says it needs $186 million to help the refugees, but only 40 percent of that amount has been raised thus far.

Sources: AP, September 19; Washington Post, September 19; WireUpdate, September 26; Sudan Tribune, September 29, 2012.

By Libby Jelinek. Send comments to ejelinek@sandiego.edu.
**SUDAN**

**Summit Deal Reached**

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and South Sudanese President Salva Kiir met at a summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia September 22 to resolve issues that remain from the splitting of South Sudan from Sudan last year.

The UN Security Council had set a September 22 deadline for agreement, threatening sanctions if the two countries failed to resolve their differences. This deadline was informally extended to the end of the summit.

The objectives of the summit were to address oil transit fees, border security, and border demarcation, specifically in regard to five disputed border regions.

In August, the countries reached a deal to restart Southern oil exports through the north. South Sudan had shut down its oil output in January because of an argument over how much South Sudan should pay to use Sudan’s pipelines. The shutdown had a crippling effect on both countries’ economies.

The deal signed on October 3 made progress on a number of issues. Both countries accepted an African Union (AU) proposal to create a demilitarized zone along the entire 1,200-mile border. Soldiers from both sides are to pull 6.2 miles back from the border.

To avoid future disputes over oil export volumes, the countries will use metering facilities. A committee headed by an AU-appointed official will also review payments and technical disputes. South Sudan agreed to pay $9.10-$11 per barrel to export through Sudan as well as $3.08 billion to help Sudan overcome the loss of three-fourths of its oil production.

The countries also agreed to increase cross-border trade and to grant citizens of each country residency in the other’s country.

However, the question of who controls the fertile Abyei region and other border crossings remains unresolved. Sudan rejected the AU proposal to resolve control of Abyei by giving a percentage of the region’s oil revenue to Sudan for development projects. The discussion of the border regions was left to an unspecified future date.

Sources: All Africa, September 20; Reuters, September 20; Chicago Tribune, September 20; Reuters, September 22; NY Times, September 26; Chicago Tribune, September 28, 2012.

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