Choice of countries for updates: The countries for the conflict updates are the countries that have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute’s dedicatory conference, “Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century,” December 5-7, 2001.

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 biographical 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.
UPDATE SUMMARY

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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AP = Associated Press
AFP = Agence France Presse
BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN = Cable News Network
DPA = Deutsche Presse-Agentur
EFE = Agencia EFE (Spanish New Agency)
HRW News = Human Rights Watch News
IRIN = Integrated Regional Information Network (UN Dept. of Humanitarian Affairs Information Network: www.unog.ch)
JED = Journaliste En Danger
NCN = New Congo Net
PANA = Pan African News Agency
Xinhua = Xinhua News Agency
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Fighting escalates in eastern DRC: Fighting between the government forces and their allies, and the Rwandan-based Goma-based Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD-Goma), has increased in the towns of Fizi and Kindu in eastern DRC. Rwandan and Burundian rebels, assisted by DRC army officers, seized the strategic town of Fizi September 7, enabling the rebel groups to mount attacks on their own countries. The RCD-Goma claimed that a pre-dawn attack of DRC troops and their Mayi-Mayi allies was repelled in Kindu. RCD-Goma spokesman Jean-Pierre Lola Kisanga stated, “This is the worst escalation of the war since March this year when all parties disengaged from frontline positions.” The RCD-Goma has charged the DRC of violating the 1999 Lusaka Peace Accord and has demanded the retraction of DRC forces in Fizi. Failure to do so would increase the fighting, said Kisanga, and thus seriously threaten the upcoming Inter-Congolese Dialogue to be held October 15 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Uganda and Rwanda, once DRC allies, have been fighting the current DRC government, since 1998, which has resulted in more than 2.5 million deaths. (IRIN, September 28, October 1; Xinhua, September 27, 2001)

RCD-Goma rejects Mayi-Mayi participation in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue: The RCD-Goma has stated that it does not condone the participation of the Mayi-Mayi rebel group in the October 15 Inter-Congolese Dialogue, as they were not a signatory to the 1999 Lusaka Peace Accord. However, the RCD-Goma agreed to preliminary talks with the Mayi-Mayi, which began in mid-September. Mayi-Mayi spokesman Anseleme Enerunga stated, “If we are not allowed to participate in this forum, if our demands are not taken into account, it will be illusory to think of any kind of peace.” The RCD-Goma’s opposition to participation of the Mayi-Mayi in the dialogue has been contrary to widespread agreement among other involved parties that the Mayi-Mayi should be recognized as a participant. Mayi-Mayi militia leaders have recently expressed their desire to speak with groups such as the RCD-Goma in preparation for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. (IRIN, September 28, October 1, 2001)

ERITREA

Government arrests dissidents: Eleven former senior officials of the Eritrean government and the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) were arrested in early morning raids September 18 and 19. The arrested officials were members of the group of 15, founding members of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front that led Eritrea to independence in 1991, and accused the government of President Afewerki of “acting in an illegal and unconstitutional manner” in a letter sent to the PFDJ leadership in May. The government accused the 11 dissidents of committing crimes against the “sovereignty, security and peace of the nation,” raising concerns that the arrested officials might be charged with treason, a crime punishable by death under Eritrean law. Suliman Baldo, senior researcher with the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, said that President Afewerki was capitalizing on the world’s current preoccupation with events in the US to "stamp out all criticism of its disastrous war policies." Much of the opposition to the
Eritrean government has stemmed from the two-year border-war with Eritrea, which killed more than 19,000 Eritreans, and ended in December 2000. (AFP, September 21; BBC, September 22; DPA, September 20; Human Rights Watch, September 21, 2001)

Government closes private newspapers: Eritrean authorities ordered the closure of all private newspapers in the country September 18, in an apparent crackdown on political dissent. Ali Abdu, head of Eritrean Television, said that the newspapers had been given time to “correct their mistakes” but had not abided by the national press code and were being shut down in the interest of national unity. A government official said that the newspapers would be allowed to reopen when “they learn to report the truth based on national interests.” According to the BBC, the papers had been the forum for debate on issues that had, until recently, been considered “untouchable.” Over the past few months, authorities have arrested several journalists for writing or publishing articles critical of the President. (AP, September 18; Freedomforum.org, September 9; Reporters Sans Frontieres, September 19, 2001)

UN mission mandate extended: The UN Security Council voted Sept. 14 to extend the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) by six months, until March 15, 2002. The decision came after the recommendation of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said that while he was encouraged by the separation and initial steps of demobilization of both countries' armed forces, "several outstanding issues remain." The Council called on both countries to provide accurate information on minefields, allow the UNMEE complete freedom of movement within 15 km on both sides of the Temporary Security Zone along the Ethiopian/Eritrean border, and "resume and rapidly complete" exchanges of prisoners of war. The Council urged both countries to engage in confidence building measures, shifting from a focus on weapons procurement toward the reconstruction and development of their economies. The Security Council created the UNMEE in July 2000, following the June signing of a cessation of hostilities, to maintain a liaison with the two countries and establish mechanisms for verifying the ceasefire. (AFP, September 7; IRIN, September. 17, 2001)

GUATEMALA

Rights group condemns violence against advocates: Human Rights Watch called for the government of Guatemala October 3 to protect advocates of children’s rights. The request, written to Guatemalan President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera called for an investigation, specifically of the harassment and threats made on Héctor Dionicio Godínez, coordinator of the Legal Assistance Program of Casa Alianza's Guatemala office. Casa Alianza has been a target of attacks after charging police and government officials with abuse of Guatemala’s “street children.” The number of attacks on human rights activists in Guatemala has increased since the signing of the 1996 peace agreement that ended the 36-year civil war. (HRW News, October 3, 2001)
MACEDONIA

NLA agrees to disband: The ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) agreed to disband and disarm, and return its members to civilian life. This action would end a seven-month uprising aimed at increasing the political rights of the country’s ethnic Albanian minority. The NLA disbanded September 27 after the decision was finalized for a new 1000-strong NATO-led force to provide security in the country’s unstable climate. NLA leader, Ali Ahmeti, pledged to cooperate towards ethnic reconciliation and for a joint peace effort with the government and the international community to overcome security problems. Ahmeti stated, “We should not create conditions that could reactivate the National Liberation Army.” The NLA’s decision to dissolve has been contingent on the government’s ratification of constitutional amendments in favor of Albanian rights, and on the government’s delayed promise to organize amnesty for the rebels as it had negotiated in the peace accord signed August 13. The NLA has called for the recognition of Macedonians and Albanians as equal national groups in the constitution. The NLA claimed that they began fighting government forces in February 2001 to attain greater rights for the ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia. (BBC, September 27; New York Times, September 28; Washington Post, September 27, 2001)

Security forces return to conflict zones: Government officials and NATO agreed September 30 that Macedonian police must undertake a restrained step-by-step return to conflict areas that were formerly held by ethnic Albanian rebels. Since NATO’s initial mission to disarm Albanian rebels was completed September 26, the Macedonian military has sought to return forces to conflict areas. NATO has reported conflict between Macedonian paramilitary and local populations and has asked the Macedonian army to withdraw. After discussions with NATO spokespeople, Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski agreed to, “the demands of the international community for a staged return which [is] aimed at guaranteeing greater security.” The August 13 peace agreement between ethnic Slav and ethnic Albanian political leaders stipulated that a step-by-step return of security forces to conflict zones must occur only after certain improvements in the status of Albanians had been met. NATO’s second mission, to provide security for international monitors observing the return of Macedonian government forces to conflict areas, has been scheduled to be operational by October 5. (AFP, DPA, September 30, 2001)

NEPAL

Maoists release police captives: Maoist rebels released 17 policemen October 2 from captivity. Rebel leaders handed the policemen over to International Committee of the Red Cross representatives at a mass rally in Surkhet, in Western Nepal. Maoist commander Comrade Prachanda announced the release of these and all other prisoners in a statement made September 29. “In response to the peoples’ aspiration for peace and freedom, our party announces the release of all policemen and other people who are still in our custody.” Government statistics showed the Maoists holding 188 persons, including 71 policemen and 117 civilians, while Maoists maintain the number of captives
is approximately 45 people. Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka has promised to reciprocate the move and started with the release of three Maoist cadres last Tuesday. The release comes as the government and Maoists are preparing to sit for their third round of talks to end the six-year Maoist insurgency that has left more than 1500 people dead. (BBC, September 29, October 2; DPA, September 29; Nepalnews.com, October 1, 2, 2001)