The countries for the Peace and Justice updates have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute. The International Human Rights section is intended to focus on aspects of international law. For information on specific cases of human rights abuses, please visit www.hrw.org or www.amnesty.org

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.

The Peace & Justice updates are written by the Spring 2003 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego. The interns are Keelia Bannon (Saint Mary’s College of California), Anna Gabriele (University of San Diego), and Diana Vlasova (University of San Diego).
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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AP = Associated Press (www.ap.org)
AFP = Agence France Presse (www.afp.com)
BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk)
CNN = Cable News Network (www.cnn.com)
DPA = Deutsche Presse-Agentur (www.dpa.com)
HRW News = Human Rights Watch News (www.hrw.org)
IRIN = Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
NCN = New Congo Net (www.marekinc.com/NCN.html)
PANA = Pan African News Agency (www.panapress.com)
UPI = United Press International (www.upi.com)
VOA = Voice of America (www.voanews.com)
Xinhua = Xinhua News Agency (www.xinhuanet.com/english/index.htm)
CHECHNYA

Chechens approve new constitution: More than 90 percent of Chechen voters approved a new constitution March 23 that, according to the Russian administration, was the beginning of the peace process. Chechen officials said more than 80 percent of the 540,000 eligible voters had cast ballots. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s envoy in southern Russia, Viktor Kazantsev, said talks with Chechnya’s 1997 elected president Aslan Maskhadov and representatives of rebel groups were not necessary since the new constitution made Chechnya part of Russia. The new constitution called for presidential and parliamentary elections in Chechnya, but set no specific deadline for holding them. Polling stations were attacked the week of March 17, but no major violence linked to the referendum was reported. Russian forces entered Chechnya in 1999 after Chechen rebels were accused of several apartment bombings in Moscow. (AFP, BBC, March 24, 2003)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Government, Uganda sign cease-fire: The governments of the DRC and Uganda, and various rebel and ethnic militia groups signed a cease-fire March 18 in the northeastern Ituri district under the auspices of the UN mission in the DRC. The signatories, including the opposing Hema and Lendu ethnic militias and the Rally for Congolese Democracy – ML, agreed to end hostilities, release all hostages, end the conscription of children into their ranks, and to the April 24 withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the DRC. The signing of the cease-fire was followed by the March 20 establishment of a technical committee to select delegates for the Ituri Pacification Commission designed to ensure a continued peace in the district. The Ituri district came under the control of Ugandan troops and allies March 6 after the Rwandan-backed Union of Congolese Patriots were expelled from the area. The conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when President Laurent Désiré Kabila’s main sponsors, Rwanda and Uganda, turned against him and began supporting an anti-government rebellion, which Kabila countered with the assistance of troops supported by Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. More than 3 million people have died in the four-year war. (The East African, March 17; IRIN, March 18; New Vision, March 18, 19, 2003)

Security Council requests increase of UN presence: The UN Security Council requested March 20 that Secretary-General Kofi Annan increase the presence of the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) in the Ituri district and increase the number of personnel in MONUC’s human rights office in order to investigate alleged human rights abuses. The Security Council adopted resolution 1468 (2003) March 20 that condemned mass killings and human rights violations in the DRC, particularly against women and girls in Ituri district. The Security Council demanded the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops in the DRC. MONUC was established November 30, 1999 in response to the 1999 Lusaka Agreement aimed at ending the conflict in the DRC. (IRIN, March 21; United Nations News, March 17, 2003)

ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA

Military officials meet: Military officials from Eritrea and Ethiopia, and from the UN forces under the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) met March 19 in Djibouti at the 16th Military Coordination Commission meeting to discuss the peace process.
between the two countries. Officials discussed the increasing number of laid landmines in the buffer zone along the shared border and issuing a joint statement to condemn and discourage the continued use of landmines. UNMEE was established by the UN Security Council July 2000 to maintain a liaison with the two countries and establish mechanisms for verifying the June 2000 cease-fire. The signing of the December 2000 Algiers accord ended the two-year border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. (Daily Monitor, March 23; BBC, March 21, 2003)

Governments, EEBC discuss security measures: Representatives of the governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia, the independent Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), and of UNMEE met March 23 to discuss security measures to be taken throughout the demarcation of the border scheduled for July 2003. UN Special Representative Legwaila Joseph Legwaila stated during the meeting that while UNMEE could assist with security along the border, Eritrea and Ethiopia should be primarily responsible for the safety of EEBC staff demarcating the border. Both countries agreed in the Algiers accord that the EEBC’s April 2002 border ruling would be final and binding. (BBC, March 24, 2003)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
Khmer Rouge trials to be held: Cambodian and UN officials agreed March 17 to establish a special genocide court to try members of the communist group Khmer Rouge for the mass killing of Cambodians between 1975 and 1979. The special court would give more investigating and prosecuting power to foreign officials, and would ensure a greater number of Cambodian judges would sit on the court. Dialogue regarding a UN-assisted court and trial for Khmer Rouge members failed February 2002 when the UN concluded that a joint tribunal with the Cambodian judicial system would not guarantee justice due to the vulnerability to political pressures within the Cambodian system. Khmer Rouge began a government insurgency in 1970 to establish a communist regime, gained momentum and resulted in ruling authority from 1975 to 1979. During the four-year period Khmer Rouge ruled in Cambodia, led by Saloth Sar, approximately 1.7 million people died from starvation, disease, execution, and being overworked. (Financial Times, Independent, Scotsman, March 18, 2003)

Gambia to establish ICC chapter: Gambian officials and members of the government’s National Assembly pledged support March 19 to implement an ICC chapter in Gambia after a series of meetings held March 18 between the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) and top government officials. Those who participated in the meetings from CICC were the implementation advisor for the ICC in the Gambia Isaac Flattau, outreach liaison Alphonse Deo Nkunzimana, human rights lawyer and chairman Ba Tambou, human rights activist and vice chairman Sheikh Lewis, and information officer Omar Bah. Gambian police force officials expressed support for construction of a Gambian ICC, which would become the first Anglophone West African country to initiate an implementation process to establish an ICC tribunal. (Africa News, Daily Observer, March 19; Financial Times, March 21, 2003)
MACEDONIA
Ethnic Albanians protest: Approximately 2,000 ethnic Albanians congregated in the town square of the northwestern city of Tetovo March 20 to protest against Macedonian authorities. The group accused authorities of unjustly keeping former National Liberation Army (NLA) members in jail, particularly Krenar Osmani sentenced to six years and Ibrahim Sulejmani sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for war crimes against the civilian population during the 2001 conflict. The protesters stated that demonstrations would continue until 130 Albanians were released who had been imprisoned based on their former affiliation with the NLA. Protesters insisted that rallies would occur in every town where ethnic Albanians lived until the prisoners were released. The conflict in Macedonia began when the NLA took up arms against the government in February 2001 to fight for the rights of the ethnic Albanian minority and ended with the signing of the August 2001 Ohrid Agreement. (BBC, March 21; Financial Times, March 24, 2003)

NEPAL
King arrives in India for discussions: King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and Queen Konal arrived in New Delhi March 20 for a 12-day visit to reportedly seek India’s support for the ongoing peace process between the Nepalese government and the Maoists. During the King’s meetings with Indian President Abdul Kalam, Prime Minster Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Deputy Prime Minster Lai Krishna Advani, they made clear India’s view that the Nepali government must have the full support of political parties to ensure a long-lasting peace, as well as India’s disapproval of western involvement in the peace process and political development of Nepal. Maoists launched a February 1996 insurgency that has resulted in approximately 8,000 deaths. Since the signing of the January 29 cease-fire, the government and Maoists have continued to work toward an official dialogue process. (AFP, Xinhua, March 20; Economic Times, March 21, 2003)

Maoists demand general amnesty: Maoists demanded March 22 that the government release at least five central Maoist leaders imprisoned in Gorkha before any peace talks could begin. The five prisoners included Krishna Dhoj Khadka, Rekha Sharma, Mumaram Khanal, Rabindra Shrestha, and Bam Dev Chhettri. In addition, a member of the Maoist negotiating team, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, demanded the government withdraw indictments of terrorism toward Maoist President Pushpa Kamal Dahal and leader Baburam Bhattarai at the Patan Appellate court. Mahara also demanded a general amnesty for Maoist detainees, to be considered upon King Gyanendra’s return from a 12-day trip to India. Thus far the government has been cooperative in slowly releasing detainees, but its compliance with Maoist demands for amnesty might delay the dialogue process reportedly set to begin in early April. (BBC, Financial Times, March 22; Nepalnews, March 22, 25, 2003)

Government, Maoists accuse each other of violations: Chief government representative for peace talks, Minister Narayan Singh Pun, and Maoist representative for talks, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, exchanged charges March 24 of violating the 22-point code of conduct agreed upon and signed March 13. Pun said that approximately 70 to 80 reports had been received stating that Maoists have violated the January 29 ceasefire by continuing with
extortions and violence in villages after the code’s implementation. Mahara refuted the charges and accused government forces of violating the code of conduct as cited in more than six reports written by rebels. (BBC, March 24; Financial Times, Nepalnews, March 23, 2003)

PHILIPPINES

MILF, government schedule talks: The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and government forces scheduled March 22 to resume peace negotiations at the end of March in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The proposed agenda for the talks has included the implementation of previously agreements, cease-fire agreements, and an end to the continued violence in Mindanao. Violence ensued again March 21-24 in the Mindanao region resulting in 36 MILF rebel deaths. Renewed hostilities began in the Mindanao region February 8 and have left more than 200 people dead and displaced approximately 100,000. Peace talks initially began in January 1997 but were repeatedly delayed by hostilities between the two groups. The MILF launched an offensive against the government in 1978 in order to create an independent Muslim state. (Financial Times, March 22; Japan Economic Newswire, March 24, 2003)

NPA attacks persist: The communist New People’s Army (NPA) attacked government and civilian targets in the region of Barangay Mangagoy March 22 by looting the armory of the Paper Industry Corporation, seizing firearms, and ambushing a civilian vehicle wounding three passengers. During a March 20 clash one NPA rebel was killed and several government soldiers were wounded and the government recovered rebel weapons and documents. The documents allegedly established a strong alliance between the NPA and the MILF. The NPA had been fighting against the government since the late 1960s making the movement one of the longest running leftist insurgencies in Asia. (Financial Times, March 22, 2003)