The countries for the Peace & 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. The Gender and Peace section highlights events in peace-building that pertain to gender and human rights.

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UPDATE SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

AfricaFocus = AfricaFocus (www.africafocus.org)
AFP = Agence France-Presse (www.afp.com)
AI = Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org)
Air Force Times = Air Force Times (http://www.airforcetimes.com)
AllAfrica = AllAfrica Global Media (www.allAfrica.com)
AP = Associated Press (www.ap.org)
BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation (http://news.bbc.co.uk)
BBC Monitoring = BBC Monitoring International Reports (www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/)
Colombo Page = Sri Lankan Online News (www.colombopage.com)
Daily News = Sri Lanka Daily News (www.dailynews.lk)
EU = European Union (www.europa.eu.int)
EU Business = EU Business (www.eubusiness.com)
Guardian = Guardian Unlimited Network (www.guardian.co.uk)
HRW = Human Rights Watch News (www.hrw.org)
ICC = International Criminal Court (www.icc-cpi.int)
ICG = International Crisis Group (www.crisisweb.org)
ICTR = International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (www.ictr.org)
Independent = The Independent (www.independent.co.uk)
IRIN = Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
Kathmandu Post = The Kathmandu Post (www.nepalnews.com.np)
La Hora = La Hora (www.lahora.com)
LA Times = Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com)
Monitor = The Monitor (www.monitor.co.ug)
MONUC = MONUC (www.monuc.org)
Nepali Times = Nepali Times (www.nepalitimes.com)
New Vision = New Vision (http://www.newvision.co.ug)
PANA = Panafrican News Agency (www.allafrica.com)
Prensa Libre = La Prensa Libre (www.prensalibre.com)
Oxfam Great Britain = Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk)
Reuters = Reuters (www.reuters.com)
Relief Web = Relief Web (www.reliefweb.com)
RMF = Rigoberta Menchú Foundation (http://www.frmt.org)
The Nation = The Nation (www.thenation.com)
UN News Center = UN News Center Homepage (www.un.org)
UNHCHR = UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.unhchr.ch)
UNICEF = UN Children’s Fund (www.unicef.org)
UNIFEM = UN Development Fund for Women (www.unifem.org)
VOA = Voice of America (www.voanews.com)
Xinhua = Xinhua News Agency (www.xinhuanet.com/english/index.htm)
WP = Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com)
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**BURUNDI**

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) donates $300,000 for reintegration of refugees: The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it received $300,000 from OPEC’s Fund for International Development. Tens of thousands of people who had left Burundi during the war over 10 years ago were now returning and the OPEC donation would be used to “finance an urgent operation to assist some 4,000 families who recently returned to two provinces in northeastern Burundi,” said UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond. After decades of conflict Burundi was on-track regarding its peace process, but a rebel holdout around the capital, Bujumbura, had caused donors to hesitate to provide humanitarian support and investment funds. However, Burundi, among the poorest countries in the world, is in desperate need of humanitarian support and development investments, and the OPEC donation came after the UN World Food Program said 2 million Burundians would need emergency food aid in 2005, 40 percent more than in 2004. (AllAfrica, March 18, 21, 2005)

**CROATIA**

Croatia takes steps to join EU: March 22 saw the return to Croatia of 47 ethnic Serb refugees who had fled the 1991-95 Croatian war for independence. The refugees, organized by the Red Cross, represent a small portion of the 180,000 refugees estimated yet to return. Croatian authorities have pledged the return of these refugees along with the restitution of their property. The authorities’ support came at a time when Croatia is seeking EU membership, and is vital to Croatia’s acceptance. Croatia hopes to join the EU by the end of the decade, but its accession has been hindered by its refusal to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The EU suspects that Croatian officials are aware of the location of retired general Ante Gotovina, wanted by the ICTY for the murder of ethnic Serbs during the 1991-95 war. Gotovina is seen a war hero by many Croatians and although authorities claim he has fled the country, UN war crimes prosecutor Carla Del Ponte has reported otherwise. (Relief Web, March 22; EU Business, March 21, 2005)

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)**

Militia leader arrested: The Congolese government announced March 22 that it had arrested Thomas Lubanga, the leader of the main Hema militia group, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC by its French initials). Lubanga and the UPC had been accused of widespread human rights abuses in the northeastern district of Ituri. Faustin Uma Unen, Lubanga’s political advisor said, “We are surprised that our leader has been taken. We demand that he be freed immediately and unconditionally.” Other Ituri militia leaders were arrested earlier in March, including Floribert Ndjabu Ngabu, leader of the Nationalist Integrationist Front (FNI). Members of the FNI are mostly from the Lendu ethnic group while the UPC is mostly Hema; fighting between the two ethnic groups has led to many deaths and tens of thousands of people displaced in Ituri since 1999. (AllAfrica, BBC, March 22, 2005)
UN peacekeeping mission to the DRC (MONUC) seizes weapons in Ituri: Peacekeepers in the DRC seized guns and ammunition March 16 in the northeastern district of Ituri. UN troops found the guns during an ongoing operation in Zumbe, near Bunia, the district capital. Despite Zumbe being the suspected headquarters of the Lendu militia group FNI, there was no contact between MONUC troops and militia when the weapons were discovered and seized. In addition to MONUC finding weapons, approximately 500 militia fighters voluntarily disarmed in Ituri in order to join the disarmament and community–based reintegration process. Simultaneously with the disarmament process MONUC had also pledged to act on human rights abuses in Ituri and to bring perpetrators of crimes before the court. UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland said March 16 that the conflict in eastern DRC had become “the biggest and most neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today.” (AllAfrica, March17, 18, 21, 2005)

UN takes action against sex abuse: The UN was investigating 17 civilian MONUC staff after allegations of sexual misconduct. The UN had fired one employee and suspended six without pay, and one other member of MONUC had resigned rather than face disciplinary action. In addition, the UN investigated 150 cases of abuse by MONUC soldiers. The UN lacks the legal authority to discipline peacekeeping soldiers found to have committed abuses, but can only send them to their country and request their government to take action. However, the UN can discipline its civilian staff. The UN peacekeepers were accused of using food and money to pay girls as young as 12 for sex. Allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers started in early 2004 and in February 2005 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that MONUC peacekeepers were banned from having sex with any locals. MONUC is the largest peacekeeping mission in the world and is in the DRC to oversee the transition toward peace after the 1998-2002 war that involved seven African nations and killed an estimated 4 million people. (AllAfrica, March 17; BBC, IRIN, March 18, 2005)

GUATEMALA

Rigoberta Menchú Foundation celebrates International Day against Racial Discrimination: March 21 marked the official International Day against Racial Discrimination, originally declared by the UN in 1966. In honor of the occasion the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation issued a statement detailing the advances and shortcomings of the Guatemalan government. The statement took the government to task for failing to allow equal participation of indigenous communities in politics. In particular it criticizes the government’s disregard of indigenous authorities; refusal to investigate and bring to justice suspects of genocidal acts; support for exploration and exploitation of mines; expropriation of ancestral lands; and denial of free access to sacred places. The statement also points to the discrimination trial filed on behalf of Rigoberta Menchú for the verbal and physical attacks directed toward her October 9, 2003 in the Constitutional Court when the court ruled that a constitutional ban on former dictators running for president did not apply to General Efraín Ríos Montt. Last, the statement calls for the recognition of people who “dare to condemn discrimination,” the reform of political institutions to promote fair participation, the strengthening of investigation processes into discrimination cases, and promotion of national dialogue about racism and discrimination. (Rigoberta Menchú Foundation, March 21, 2005)
U.S. renews military funding: The U.S. was to renew military aid to Guatemala for the first time in 15 years according to U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala John Hamilton. March 24 U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was to visit Guatemala and was expected to make an official proposal to authorities there. Military funding was suspended under President Jimmy Carter’s administration in response to human rights violations during Guatemala’s civil war, which lasted from 1960 to 1996 and pitted the Guatemalan military against civilians and leftist guerrillas. About 200,000 people are estimated to have been killed, the majority of them indigenous. While the U.S. has supplied Guatemala with some military funding, the funding has been limited to the fight against drug trafficking and kept out of the control of the Guatemala’s military. The U.S. Embassy announced that the funding would amount to 3.2 million dollars. Despite some progress since the war's end, human rights violations continue. Early March saw the use of police and military brutality against protesters staging demonstrations against the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which was ratified by the legislature March 14. (Air Force Times, March 22, 2005)

RWANDA

Gacaca judges accused of participation in the genocide: The National Service of Gacaca Jurisdiction reported that 770 of the 200,000 judges in the Gacaca tribunals had been asked to resign after accusations of participation in the 1994 genocide. Some of the accused judges were arrested immediately. The largest number of accused judges was in Kigali province, with 131 accused, and 123 of the accused judges were in the western Kibuye province. A Rwandan human rights activist pointed out that this might just be the beginning as more and more judges are being accused of taking part in the genocide. Judges in the semi-traditional Gacaca courts were elected by their communities on the basis of having high moral integrity. The Gacaca courts were instituted to speed up the process of bringing the actors of the 1994 genocide, which killed 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus, to justice. (AllAfrica, March 17, 2005)

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Amnesty International reports Serbia and Montenegro fail to fulfill human rights: Amnesty International released a report March 21 entitled, “Serbia and Montenegro: A wasted year. The continuing failure to fulfill key human rights commitments made to the Council of Europe.” As suggested by the title, the report details the limited progress Serbia and Montenegro has made in fulfilling its commitments to the Council of Europe, while urging both Serbia and Montenegro and the Council of Europe to do all in their power to bring human rights abusers to justice. Serbia and Montenegro joined the Council of Europe two years ago committing to a number of agreements and conventions promoting human rights. This came four years after the 1999 conflict in which thousands of ethnic Albanians were killed. Among the commitments to which Serbia and Montenegro agreed under its membership, the assurance of the prosecution of dozens of war criminals and the pledge to monitor and punish police brutality were chief concerns of the report. It noted the failure of Serbia and Montenegro to arrest war crimes suspects, prosecute high level suspects, investigate political violence and killings, and prevent discrimination against Kosovar Roma. (Amnesty International, March 23, 2005)
SOMALIA

Parliament erupts into violence as MPs debate peacekeepers: The transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) met in Nairobi this week to vote on the proposed deployment of peacekeeping troops from Somalia’s frontline states. As the votes came in, with 156 members of parliament (MPs) opposed and 55 in favor, fighting broke out with MPs throwing heavy chairs, trading punches and beating each other with sticks. The situation, broadcast live on Kenyan television, left three MPs wounded and led to the arrest of another. Speaker of the transitional federal parliament Sharif Hassan Shaykh Aden stated that the fighting was “planned by those who feared losing the vote on the motion.” Conversely, government spokesman Abdirahman Nur Dinari, who did not recognize the legitimacy of the vote, argued that Aden and other warlords were responsible. President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed originally requested the deployment of troops to disarm militias in the capital, Mogadishu, and create a safe environment for the return of the TFG. However the planned inclusion of Somalia’s neighbors Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia has proved highly controversial. (BBC, March 17; IRIN, March 17, 18; The Nation, March 19, 2005)

Uganda and Sudan to provide peacekeepers: The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), commissioned with the task of providing peacekeepers to aid the TFG in relocation, announced that it would now only deploy troops from Uganda and Sudan. This move was said to have been made out of the respect for the sensitivities of Somalis and came in the wake of increased protests on the streets of Mogadishu and the recent outbreak of violence in the exiled parliament. Uganda and Sudan have responded by agreeing to send 6,800 troops. IGAD had not ruled out the involvement of troops from Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia altogether, but had stated that although these will only be involved on a logistical basis at the start they could provide further practical assistance in the future. This proviso angered some Somali leaders who are adamantly opposed to any involvement by these countries. Opposition to the IGAD proposal had also come from within the Ugandan government with one minister claiming, “It is illogical to take troops outside our borders when we can’t defend all our people inside the borders.” (BBC, March 18; IRIN, March 21, 2005)

Cabinet votes against Mogadishu as capital: Members of the TFG voted against a return to the Somali capital and instead proposed relocation to the towns of Baidoa and Jowhar. Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi stated that a security office would be established in Mogadishu and the government would remain committed to returning to the capital once security had been assured. Ten ministers walked out before the vote was taken, claiming the government had no right to change Somalia’s capital. The opposing ministers were key Mogadishu warlords that have been at the forefront of opposition to peacekeepers and have yet to disarm their militias. The change in location for the return of the TFG took pressure away from the issue of peacekeeping troops. It is thought that without the move to Mogadishu peacekeeping troops may not be needed. (BBC, March 21, 2005)
SUDAN

Nigeria proposes alternative to ICC: In an effort to resolve the conflict in Darfur and release the UN Security Council from its current deadlock, Nigeria proposed the establishment of an African-run tribunal to try war crimes suspects. The proposal appeared to have support from the U.S., with spokesman Richard Grenell stating, “We welcome the general principle that African solutions are required for African problems.” A recent UN report on the crisis in Darfur had recommended that those responsible for the atrocities be tried by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, but the U.S. has refused to endorse the ICC. The position of the European countries regarding the Nigerian proposal is not yet clear. This week the UN decided to withdraw humanitarian staff after it emerged that convoys had been targeted and looted by Janjaweed militia. The Janjaweed militias, backed by the Sudanese government, have been accused of mass killings, torture, and rape of villagers in Darfur. Their actions have left up to 180,000 dead and a further 2 million displaced. (BBC, March 16, 17; IRIN, March 18, 2005)

UGANDA

LRA steps up attacks: Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels attacked a village 30 km south of Gulu in northern Uganda, abducting 49 people, many of whom were thought to be school children and teenagers. According to a recent UN report the LRA, notorious for kidnapping children in order to boost its ranks, is comprised of 80 percent abducted children with the total number abducted over the duration of the 19-year war numbering 20,000. UN Under-Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs Jan Egeland described the plight of the children saying “Thousands have been raped, brutalized, drugged and forced to inflict unspeakable violence on others.” Further attacks occurred in Kitgum district where seven women were attacked by rebels and left severely mutilated. The Ugandan newspaper New Vision reported that the women had their lips, ears and breasts cut off by a rebel who was thought to only be 16 years old. The attacks came in the wake of recent government statements indicating that the war against the LRA is almost won. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA seeks revenge against the government for past transgressions and targets all believed to collaborate with it. The war has left tens of thousands dead and led to the displacement of 1.6 million. (BBC, March 18; CNN, March 21; IRIN, March 22; New Vision, March 21, 2005)