



**Peace & Justice Update**  
*October 24, 2008*  
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The countries for the Peace & Justice Updates have been chosen as areas of focus at the Institute.

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## SOURCE LIST

ADINA	=	Agencia Peruana de Noticias ( <a href="http://www.andina.com.pe">www.andina.com.pe</a> )
AFP	=	Agence France-Presse ( <a href="http://www.afp.com">www.afp.com</a> )
AfricaFocus	=	AfricaFocus ( <a href="http://www.africafocus.org">www.africafocus.org</a> )
AI	=	Amnesty International ( <a href="http://www.amnesty.org">www.amnesty.org</a> )
AllAfrica	=	AllAfrica Global Media ( <a href="http://www.allafrica.com">www.allafrica.com</a> )
AP	=	Associated Press ( <a href="http://www.ap.org">www.ap.org</a> )
APN	=	Asia-Pacific News ( <a href="http://www.apn.bttravel.com">www.apn.bttravel.com</a> )
Asian Tribune	=	Asian Tribune ( <a href="http://www.asiantribune.com">www.asiantribune.com</a> )
AWID	=	Association for Women's Rights in Development ( <a href="http://www.awid.org">www.awid.org</a> )
BBC	=	British Broadcasting Corporation ( <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk">http://news.bbc.co.uk</a> )
BBC Monitoring	=	BBC Monitoring International Reports ( <a href="http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk">www.monitor.bbc.co.uk</a> )
Bloomberg	=	Bloomberg ( <a href="http://www.bloomberg.com">www.bloomberg.com</a> )
CBC News	=	CBC News ( <a href="http://www.cbc.ca">www.cbc.ca</a> )
CENS	=	China Economic News Service ( <a href="http://www.cens.com">www.cens.com</a> )
CFR	=	Council on Foreign Relations ( <a href="http://www.cfr.org">www.cfr.org</a> )
CIA	=	CIA - The World Factbook ( <a href="http://www.cia.gov">www.cia.gov</a> )
CNN	=	CNN ( <a href="http://www.cnn.com">www.cnn.com</a> )
Colombia Reports	=	Colombia Reports ( <a href="http://www.colombiareports.com">www.colombiareports.com</a> )
Daily Dispatch Online	=	Daily Dispatch Online ( <a href="http://www.dispatch.co.za">www.dispatch.co.za</a> )
Daily Star	=	The Daily Star ( <a href="http://www.thedailystar.net">www.thedailystar.net</a> )
Economist	=	The Economist ( <a href="http://www.economist.com">www.economist.com</a> )
EU	=	European Union ( <a href="http://www.europa.eu.int">www.europa.eu.int</a> )
DPA	=	Deutsche Presse-Agentur ( <a href="http://www.dpa.de/index.html">www.dpa.de/index.html</a> )
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network ( <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk">www.guardian.co.uk</a> )
Guatemala Times	=	The Guatemala Times ( <a href="http://www.guatemala-times.com">www.guatemala-times.com</a> )
Himalayan Times	=	The Himalayan Times ( <a href="http://www.thehimalayantimes.com">www.thehimalayantimes.com</a> )
Holiday	=	The Holiday ( <a href="http://www.weeklyholiday.net">www.weeklyholiday.net</a> )
HRW	=	Human Rights Watch ( <a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a> )
IANS	=	Indo-Asian News Service ( <a href="http://www.ians.in">www.ians.in</a> )
ICC	=	International Criminal Court ( <a href="http://www.icc-cpi.int">www.icc-cpi.int</a> )
ICG	=	International Crisis Group ( <a href="http://www.crisisweb.org">www.crisisweb.org</a> )
IHT	=	International Herald Tribune ( <a href="http://www.iht.com">www.iht.com</a> )
Independent	=	The Independent ( <a href="http://www.independent.co.uk">www.independent.co.uk</a> )
India Times	=	India Times ( <a href="http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com">www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com</a> )
Inside Costa Rica	=	Inside Costa Rica ( <a href="http://insidecostarica.com">http://insidecostarica.com</a> )
IOL	=	IOL South Africa News ( <a href="http://www.iol.co.za">www.iol.co.za</a> )
IPS News Agency	=	Inter Press Service News Agency ( <a href="http://ipsnews.net">http://ipsnews.net</a> )
IRIN	=	Integrated Regional Information Network ( <a href="http://www.irinnews.org">www.irinnews.org</a> )
IWPR	=	Institute for War & Peace Reporting ( <a href="http://www.iwpr.net">www.iwpr.net</a> )
Jurist	=	The Jurist ( <a href="http://jurist.law.pitt.edu">http://jurist.law.pitt.edu</a> )
Kaiser	=	The Henry J. Kaiser Foundation ( <a href="http://www.kaisernetwork.org">www.kaisernetwork.org</a> )
Kantipur Online	=	The Kantipur Online ( <a href="http://www.kantipuronline.com">www.kantipuronline.com</a> )
Kathmandu Post	=	The Kathmandu Post ( <a href="http://www.nepalnews.com.np">www.nepalnews.com.np</a> )
KBC	=	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation ( <a href="http://www.kbc.co.ke">www.kbc.co.ke</a> )
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times ( <a href="http://www.latimes.com">www.latimes.com</a> )
Living in Peru	=	Living in Peru ( <a href="http://www.livinginperu.com">www.livinginperu.com</a> )

Mongabay	=	Mongabay ( <a href="http://www.mongabay.com">www.mongabay.com</a> )
Media Club	=	Media Club ( <a href="http://www.medioclubsouthafrica.com">www.medioclubsouthafrica.com</a> )
Media for Freedom	=	Media for Freedom ( <a href="http://www.mediaforfreedom.com">www.mediaforfreedom.com</a> )
Medical News Today	=	Medical News Today ( <a href="http://www.medicalnewstoday.com">www.medicalnewstoday.com</a> )
Miami Herald	=	Miami Herald ( <a href="http://www.miamiherald.com">www.miamiherald.com</a> )
Monitor	=	Monitor Online ( <a href="http://www.monitor.co.ug">www.monitor.co.ug</a> )
MONUC	=	MONUC ( <a href="http://www.monuc.org">www.monuc.org</a> )
Nepal Monitor	=	Nepal Monitor ( <a href="http://www.nepalmonitor.com">www.nepalmonitor.com</a> )
Nepal News	=	Nepal News ( <a href="http://www.nepalnews.com">www.nepalnews.com</a> )
Nepali Times	=	Nepali Times ( <a href="http://www.nepalitimes.com">www.nepalitimes.com</a> )
New Age Daily	=	The New Age Daily ( <a href="http://www.newagebd.com">www.newagebd.com</a> )
New Nation	=	The New Nation ( <a href="http://nation.ittefaq.com">http://nation.ittefaq.com</a> )
New Vision	=	New Vision ( <a href="http://www.newvision.co.ug">www.newvision.co.ug</a> )
News24	=	News24 ( <a href="http://www.news24.com">www.news24.com</a> )
NYT	=	The New York Times ( <a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a> )
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam Great Britain ( <a href="http://www.oxfam.org.uk">www.oxfam.org.uk</a> )
PANA	=	Panafrican News Agency ( <a href="http://www.panapress.com">www.panapress.com</a> )
Prensa Latina	=	Prensa Latina ( <a href="http://www.plenglish.com">www.plenglish.com</a> )
Prensa Libre	=	Prensa Libre ( <a href="http://www.prensalibre.com">www.prensalibre.com</a> )
Resolve Uganda	=	Resolve Uganda ( <a href="http://www.resolveuganda.org">www.resolveuganda.org</a> )
Reuters	=	Reuters ( <a href="http://www.reuters.com">www.reuters.com</a> )
RSF	=	Reporters sans frontières ( <a href="http://www.rsf.org">www.rsf.org</a> )
SABC	=	South African Broadcasting Corporation ( <a href="http://www.sabc.co.za">http://www.sabc.co.za</a> )
SA Terrorism Portal	=	South Asian Terrorism Portal ( <a href="http://www.satp.org">www.satp.org</a> )
SEAPA	=	Southeast Asian Press Alliance ( <a href="http://www.seapabkk.org">www.seapabkk.org</a> )
Sky News	=	Sky News ( <a href="http://news.sky.com/skynews">http://news.sky.com/skynews</a> )
ST	=	Sudan Tribune ( <a href="http://www.sudantribune.com">www.sudantribune.com</a> )
Star Online	=	The Star Online ( <a href="http://www.thestar.com.my">www.thestar.com.my</a> )
TSN	=	Tanzania Standard Newspapers ( <a href="http://dailynews.habarileo.co.tz">http://dailynews.habarileo.co.tz</a> )
Telegraph	=	Telegraph ( <a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk">www.telegraph.co.uk</a> )
Times of India	=	Times of India ( <a href="http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com">http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com</a> )
UDW	=	Upside Down World ( <a href="http://upside-down-world.org">http://upside-down-world.org</a> )
UN News	=	UN News Center ( <a href="http://www.un.org/news">www.un.org/news</a> )
UNESCO	=	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization ( <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a> )
UNHCR	=	UN High Commissioner for Refugees ( <a href="http://www.unhcr.org">www.unhcr.org</a> )
UNICEF	=	UN Children's Fund ( <a href="http://www.unicef.org">www.unicef.org</a> )
UNIFEM	=	UN Development Fund for Women ( <a href="http://www.unifem.org">www.unifem.org</a> )
VOA	=	Voice of America ( <a href="http://www.voanews.com">www.voanews.com</a> )
Web India	=	Web India ( <a href="http://www.webindia123.com">www.webindia123.com</a> )
Winnipeg Sun	=	Winnipeg Sun ( <a href="http://www.winnipeg.sun.com">www.winnipeg.sun.com</a> )
WP	=	The Washington Post ( <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a> )
Xinhua	=	Xinhua News Agency ( <a href="http://www.xinhuanet.com/english">www.xinhuanet.com/english</a> )

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## **BANGLADESH**

Clashes at Universities. Separate, unrelated clashes on October 20 at university and college campuses resulted in at least 60 injuries. In one incident, Dhaka College students attacked Dhaka City College students over the teasing of a female student, allegedly resulting in injuries to 10 students of Dhaka College when police charged crowds with batons. In the confrontation, police fired tear gas shells onto the Dhaka College campus and students threw bricks at police. About 10 motor vehicles were reportedly vandalized by Dhaka College students. According to Dhaka City College Principle Md Hfiz Uddin, these kinds of attacks by Dhaka College students on City College students are frequent. A separate, violent incident at Jagannath University involved a battle between the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the Awami League's student party, and activist group Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), over distribution of admission forms for honors classes. To stop the activists, police used teargas shells and batons; the groups reacted to the police by using bricks. Tensions ran high on campus as 25 students and 5 police were injured in the incident. A third incident occurred at a Polytechnic Institute, where two sects of the BCL clashed over control of a dormitory. Four students sustained injuries from stabbing and others were beaten. In all three incidents teachers, students and police were among the injured. (Daily Star, October 21, 2008).

Party dialogues to discuss free and fair December elections. According to an announcement on October 20, the Caretaker Government (CTG) will hold a second round of negotiations with political parties to discuss and agree upon the conditions necessary to hold free, fair, and credible elections on December 18. The December 18 elections are meant to restore the country to democracy. Negotiations are scheduled to begin October 23. The CTG has scheduled a meeting with the Awami League (AL), one of Bangladesh's major political parties led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, for October 23 and is reportedly finalizing a meeting with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the other powerful political party in Bangladesh. According to AL Presidium Member, Tofail Ahmed, "issues including withdrawal of all false charges against our party chief Sheikh Hasina and her unconditional permanent release, withdrawal of the state of emergency, and deferral of the upazila [local districts] elections," will be discussed in the negotiation. Previous government dialogues with political parties, particularly with the AL and BNP, have ended inconclusively in a stalemate about how to proceed with the election. Mutual dialogue between the political parties and the CTG will continue up to the election in order to foster an environment of trust. The CTG, backed by the military, took over the government in January 2007 when a state of emergency was imposed due to the violent and corrupt elections. Over the past year, the CTG has engaged in efforts to stem government corruption, and the two major leaders of the country, Sheik Hasina of the Awami League, and Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, were arrested and have since been released. According to the CTG, the parties will decide if corruption suspects are allowed to participate in the pending December 18 elections. These negotiations are considered vital to laying the groundwork for free and fair elections later this year. (Daily Star, October 21, 2008).

## **COLOMBIA**

Indigenous Colombians clash with government. Between twelve and twenty thousand indigenous Colombians are participating in protests, expressing distress over historic mistreatment by the government, and demanding the return of land, improved health care, education, and the end of violence against indigenous people. Native Colombians began marching on October 21 from the Cauca department to Cali, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city, to pressure President Álvaro Uribe to talk with group leaders about their concerns. According to the newspaper, El Espectador, the march will continue to

Bogotá should Uribe continue to refuse talks. The protests began a week ago and turned violent October 13 when protestors blocked the Cauca and Valle del Cauca border of the Panamerican highway - Colombia's most crucial highway – where the National Police's Mobile Anti-Riot Squad used violence to repress the protestors and break the highway blockade. This clash killed two and injured 70 protestors, according to indigenous organizations. Indigenous leaders report that at least four demonstrators have been killed and 130 injured in clashes with security forces over the past two weeks of protests. Uribe admitted on October 22 that police opened fire on demonstrators, despite the government's pledge not to do so and initially denying the allegation. The government asserts that protesters have tried to use homemade bombs against security forces. The conflict at the Pan-American Highway influenced Uribe's agreement to compensate indigenous communities for land that was stolen by paramilitaries and forced the displacement of large numbers of indigenous people. However, indigenous groups contend that previous promises of compensation have not come to fruition. Thus far, Uribe has not agreed to talks with indigenous group leaders and protests concerning health care, education, and security continue. Uribe has accused the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) of encouraging the protests. These protests come at a time of widespread civil unrest, with strikes by sugar-cane cutters, judicial workers, and university students currently underway. In response, Uribe has declared a national state of emergency. Colombia has long-running tensions with its indigenous population. While various laws are in place to protect indigenous communities, including the 1991 Colombian Constitution, International Labor Organization Convention 169, and Colombian national law 21, reports indicate that these statutes are not effectively protecting the native communities. According to a report by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the condition and treatment of native communities is deteriorating. Colombia has a large population of internally displaced people, most of whom are indigenous. Many are displaced because of Colombia's civil conflict and are forced to flee, or are confined, by paramilitary groups. There is also a growing concern that Colombian security forces are mistreating indigenous groups. These concerns stem from the practice of extra-judicial killings by Colombian security forces in which natives are presented as guerillas killed in battles. In a letter by WOLA to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State David Kramer, the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia (ONIC) reports that "militarization has increased the recruitment of indigenous youth to illegal and legal armed actors and the armed forces impregnate indigenous girls, bring sexually transmitted diseases to the communities, forcibly recruit youth and involve civil society in the conflict as informants, or by continuously falsely labeling them as being from one illegal armed group or the other." The recent march to Cali was instigated after inconclusive dialogues between indigenous leaders and Uribe's cabinet ministers. ([CNN](#), October 23; [Colombia Reports](#), October 20, 21, 23; [WOLA](#), September 12, 2008).

Para-politics deepens. According to a report by Human Rights Watch on October 16, the government of President Álvaro Uribe, an ally of the U.S. government, has jeopardized and undermined Colombian Supreme Court investigations into ties between paramilitaries and the government. The report does recognize the important steps Uribe's government has taken in investigating paramilitary groups, which have committed massacres, forced disappearances, displaced civilians, and have been heavily involved in drug trafficking. However, the report specifically accuses the Uribe administration of undermining the Supreme Court's probes into ties between high ranking government officials and paramilitary groups. According to the report, "President Uribe's and his cabinet members' repeated verbal attacks, bizarre public accusations and personal phone calls to members of the court create an environment of intimidation." Uribe and his administration have denounced the report calling it "simplistic and mistaken" and claim that the government has respected the independence of the judicial branch and has taken strides in

dismantling the paramilitaries. These accusations come as Uribe is lobbying the U.S. Congress to approve a free-trade agreement. In the investigations of ‘para-politics,’ 60 members of the Colombian Congress have come under investigation, most from Uribe’s coalition. (Human Rights Watch, October 16; NYT, October 17; Washington Post, October 17, 2008).

## **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Lawmakers and local leaders switch allegiances to support Nkunda. In a ceremony held October 17 in the rebel-controlled eastern town of Bunagana, two provincial lawmakers and over 100 local and provincial officials defected from the government in Kinshasa and declared their support for former general Laurent Nkunda. The move was seen as a major public relations victory for Nkunda’s National Congress for the People’s Defense (CNDP) rebel group and comes shortly after his recent proclamation that his CNDP rebels will expand their operations outside of the North Kivu region. There has been no official comment from President Joseph Kabila. Francois Gacaba, a member of parliament who represents North Kivu’s capital of Goma, and one of the two lawmakers to switch allegiances, stated that he shifted his support because the security situation is worse in government-controlled territories than it is in rebel-controlled areas. He also argued that he felt as though the people that he was elected to represent were better off under the CNDP than the government. In addition to introducing the newest supporters of his movement, Nkunda also used the ceremony to show off the new heavy weaponry that his rebels had captured from recent battles against the Congolese army. When questioned by reporters as to why he supported Nkunda’s movement, a resident of Bunagana replied: “all around Congo people are suffering...the government has been given a chance. It has failed.” When questioned about the future motives of Nkunda, CNDP executive committee spokesman Major Mbera Castro informed reporters that the CNDP would again engage the army “in the coming days,” but he provided no further specifics. (AFP, October 18, 20; BBC, October 2, 2008).

Humanitarian crisis grows in eastern DRC. After nearly two months of continuous fighting between government troops and rebel groups, a week of relative calm in the eastern DRC provided aid agencies with an opportunity to reanalyze the situation and determine where to redeploy their resources. A recent assessment conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with support from the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), approximated that in the past two months over 50,000 people have fled the Ituri region and nearly 100,000 have been displaced from the North Kivu region because of the fighting. Separate surveys estimate that the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North Kivu region alone is close to one million. One of the major concerns is the effect that the fighting is having on relief operations in the region. The intense fighting in both the North Kivu and Ituri regions has severely restricted the movement of humanitarian agencies, leaving thousands of IDPs isolated and without resources. Many supply routes to towns on the outskirts of Goma are inaccessible because they are controlled by rebels from Nkunda’s National Congress for the People’s Defense (CNDP). In response to the deteriorating security situation, as well as concerns expressed by relief organizations on the ground, MONUC recently announced that they have begun providing security escorts to humanitarian groups in the North Kivu region. This comes amid an increase in harassment of humanitarian workers from both the various rebels groups and from the Congolese Army (FARDC). In a sign of the increased threat to aid workers, MONUC forces were recently called to the town of Nyakunde in Ituri province to secure the release of a 14 member medical team who were trapped in a hospital by Popular Front for Justice in Congo (FPJC)

rebels. The leader of the MONUC mission, Alan Doss, recently requested more resources to deal with the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation. While it is unlikely that additional troops will be sent to the DRC, the UN has announced that additional UNHCR staff and resources are being prepared to be sent to the country. (MONUC, October 16; Reuters, October 14, 17; UN News Service, October 13, 14, 2008)

## **GUATEMALA**

First Americas Social Forum held in Central America generates major turnout. The third Americas Social Forum took place in Guatemala at the historic University San Carlos October 7-12. The dates of the forum were chosen symbolically to remember October 8, 1967 when Che Guevara was captured in Bolivia, and October 12, the date that some have traditionally celebrated as the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas (Dia de la Hispanidad) but which has been commemorated as a day of resistance by indigenous people since 1992. This was the first time that the forum was held in a Central American country. The Americas Social Forum is an offshoot of the World Social Forum first held in Brazil in 2001. More than 7,000 delegates and 350 organizations from the Americas and Europe came together to discuss issues such as land reform, the environment, the food crisis and the perceived failures of neo-liberalism. The forum sought to promote a new type of socialism, "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism." According to Venezuela's leftist President, Hugo Chávez, and others, it is described as an ideology that stems from anti-capitalist sentiment, and which has caused a departure from relations with the U.S. In expressing support for the neo-socialist movement, Jorge Coronado of the Hemispheric Commission from the Americas Social Forum identified the forum as "the forum of resistance of the continental people's movement." The event was characterized additionally as overwhelmingly indigenous, female-dominated, and youth driven. Both indigenous and peasants' rights organizations were present and addressed pressing issues such as agrarian reform, rights to land and water and indigenous inclusion and rights. With respect to the campaign for indigenous rights, Nobel Peace laureate and symbol of Mayan resistance Rigoberta Menchú announced October 17 that she is in the process of starting her own political party in Guatemala. A group of women Nobel Peace laureates at the forum, the Nobel Woman's Initiative, stated that they support Mesoamerican feminists and are calling for gender equality for all. Their meetings addressed the problems of femicide and the concern of inequality, especially for women living in Central America. Many of the groups involved in the 2008 Americas Social Forum plan on continuing participation in future social forums and events including the 2009 World Social Forum taking place in Belem, Brazil. (Guatemala Times, October 17; Inside Costa Rica, October 8; Miami Herald, October 10; Prensa Latina, October 2; Upside Down World, October 14, 2008)

Mexican gang penetrates local Guatemalan drug cartels; Colom suggests new press law after media accusations. It has been reported that approximately 300 members of a Mexican paramilitary gang, the Zeta gang, which is the armed sector of the Mexican Gulf drug cartel, are currently in Guatemala, and now operate in many departments. 78 members have been identified. Los Zetas, under leader Daniel Perez Rojas, "el Cachetes," were responsible for the March 25 killing of eight Mexicans and four Guatemalans in the Zacapa region. All victims were drug traffickers including their local leader Juan Jose Leon "Juancho." According to reports, the Zeta gang came to Guatemala in order to remove local drug cartels and control the area. In other domestic events, President Álvaro Colom has proposed the creation of a new media law, which he believes is necessary to hold the media accountable for misinformation, defamation, or accusations without proof. Media groups contend that the law would curtail freedom of expression. This came after media launched

accusations claiming that the President would use his political power to protect recently extradited former President, Alfonso Portillo. Portillo has stated that he came back to Guatemala after the Óscar Berger Presidency ended because he knew that Colom would bring him to justice. Press sources have implied that Colom would use his authority to influence the judicial system and alter the outcome of Portillo. (Guatemala News, October 18; Prensa Latina, October 16; Prensa Libre, October 10, 2008)

## **NEPAL**

Formation of army integration committee stalls. Attempts to form a special committee to implement the process of army integration hit an impasse as the major political parties disagreed upon who should lead the committee. While the Communist Party Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and their main governing coalition partner, the Communist Party Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), came to an agreement October 21 regarding the formation of the committee, negotiations broke down when the leaders of the four main political parties – CPN-M, CPN-UML, Nepali Congress (NC), and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) – met October 22 to discuss the issue. Representatives from the NC – the main opposition party in the Constituent Assembly (CA) – and from the CPN-UML expressed strong resistance to having a Maoist politician lead the committee. Calling the CPN-M’s proposal “unacceptable,” NC Vice President Ram Chandra Poudel expressed his party’s strong opposition and offered a counter-proposal with two potential resolutions: a rotation of the committee chair position among the four major political parties, or the appointment of a permanent chair from any party except the CPN-M. Poudel stated that if the NC’s proposal is rejected, they have no interest in participating in the committee. Senior leaders from the CPN-M, CPN-UML, and MJF are expected to meet to consider the NC proposal. Media reports had speculated that the Maoists favored appointing Minister of Defense Ram Bahadur Thapa (CPN-M) or Minister for Peace and Reconciliation Janardan Sharma (CPN-M) to chair of the committee. Despite their disagreement over the head of the committee, the leaders of the four parties did agree to the overall composition of the committee, which will include representatives from the government, the Nepali Army (NA), the Maoist People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and the Nepali police. Speculation surrounding the integration of PLA combatants has swirled for months, with the NC, CPN-UML, and MJF consistently opposed to integration en masse. MJF leaders have gone so far as to warn of possible “disintegration of the nation” if Maoist combatants are integrated en masse into the NA while members of the armed groups operating in the Terai are left unaccounted for. Despite reports to the contrary, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s most recent comments suggest that the Maoists may be willing to compromise from their previous position of full integration for all PLA combatants. Under the terms of the 2006 UN peace deal, there are over 19,000 Maoist fighters currently residing in UN-supervised camps across the country. (Himalayan Times, October 20, 21; Kantipur Report, October 17, 20, 22; Kathmandu Post, October 21; Nepal News, October 17, 22, 2008)

Government takes tougher stance while continuing to push for peace talks. While announcing that progress has been made in the peace talks with the armed groups operating in the Terai, the government also threatened to use force if the groups failed to participate. Minister for Peace and Reconciliation, and chief of the government’s Terai peace team, Janardan Sharma announced October 21 that informal negotiations are currently underway between his team and several of the armed groups operating in the Terai. While Sharma refused to disclose exactly which groups his team had spoken with or the content of their conversations, he did concede that his team was still trying to contact several of the smaller and lesser known groups in the region. Another member of

the government team, Minister for Local Development Ram Chandra Jha, confirmed that the team has had “direct and indirect contact” with at least seven of the armed groups. His statement correlates with several media reports which claim that back channels are being used to attempt to bring the armed groups into formal negotiations. Minister Jha also reiterated an earlier declaration that the government would provide security for the negotiating teams sent by the armed groups. These signs of progress come amid continuing violence in the region and threats by government officials regarding the potential consequences if armed groups refuse to participate in the negotiations. Twice in the past week, Deputy Prime Minister Bam Dev Gautam has forewarned that the government was prepared to use force to control the activities of any armed group that disregards the government’s invitation to begin a peace dialogue. His most recent comments come on the same day that a bomb blast injured 11 people outside the Land Revenue Office in Janakpur, located in the Dhanusha district approximately 135 kilometers southeast of Kathmandu. The Rajan Mukti faction of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha claimed responsibility for the blast. News organizations and human rights groups estimate that dozens of people have been killed since 2006 due to violence throughout the Terai. The armed groups operating in the region have consistently demanded greater regional autonomy and claim that they are discriminated against by the government in terms of representation in the parliament, judiciary, and other state institutions. (Himalayan Times, October 20, 22; IRIN, October 21; Kantipur Report, October 22; Nepal News, October 18, 21, 22, 2008)

## **PERU**

Peruvian guerrilla group raids U.S. mining company. A Peruvian mining camp of the U.S.-based metals company Doe Run was raided by suspected members of the Shining Path guerrilla group October 22. According to a Reuters report, 30 armed rebels stole radios, food, medicine and dynamite. The attack took place in the coca-rich Huancavelica region of the southern Andes where Doe Run is exploring for minerals, the third such attack this month. The attacks, which have killed at least 17 people, come at a time when Peru is preparing for the 15<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Ministers’ Meeting scheduled to take place next month in Lima. The Shining Path led a deadly campaign in the 1980s and early 90s, but collapsed after its leader, Abímael Guzmán, was captured. However, members are still active but are assumed to have abandoned their Maoist ideology and have taken to protecting the drug trade. Currently, Peru is the world’s second largest producer of coca, the raw ingredient in cocaine, after Colombia. (Reuters, October 22, 2008)

Amazon tribes pushed into Brazil as Peru fails to protect their rights. Unchecked logging in the Peruvian Amazon is pushing some of the last isolated tribes in the world into Brazil, reported a leading Brazilian researcher and indigenous rights group October 17. Jose Meirelles of the Brazilian government’s Indian affairs agency said “the loggers are killing and expelling the isolated people.” From his observation outpost in Brazil he has seen regular evidence of the isolated tribes fleeing the destruction of their traditional homeland. His photographs of newly built huts inside the Brazilian border are further evidence of the tribal migration from Peru. The planks of wood, empty fuel containers, and other debris floating down the Envira river are evidence of the logging activity taking place upstream. “Until two years ago, there were three peoples (in the area). A fourth moved to the area recently. The cut of their hair, their arrows and the place where they live is distinct from the others,” reported Meirelles. Beatriz Huertas, an official with international indigenous rights group CIPIACI spent three weeks on the border area in June this year, and reports that logging is causing conflicts between local tribes over the growing scarcity of resources in Peru, which in turn forces some groups to migrate into Brazil. “On one side they are persecuted and killed by loggers and when they flee they come into conflict with rival isolated tribes. So they have to keep looking

for space where they can feed themselves.” It is Peru’s policy to recognize and protect the rights of the isolated indigenous groups. The Peruvian Indian Affairs department promised to issue a full study on the isolated tribes and the logging conflict several months ago. An official at the department told Reuters that Indian Affairs still aims to issue the study. (Mongabay, October 22; Reuters, October 17, 2008)

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

Progress is finally being made in the fight against AIDS. In a recent statement signifying a major shift in official thinking about AIDS in South Africa, newly appointed health minister Barbara Hogan stated, “We know that HIV causes AIDS.” Previously, officials in South Africa have questioned the link between HIV and AIDS. Hogan has declared that AIDS is her main priority and that she will work towards promoting greater awareness within the South African population. Various research programs have already been initiated in South Africa, but have not yet been completed due to the lack in funding. One of the leading research programs is the South Africa Aids Vaccine Initiative (SAAVI). SAAVI was established in 1999 with the goal of developing and testing effective and affordable AIDS vaccines in South Africa that would be available to the public as soon as possible. At the Global Aids Vaccine Conference, which opened October 13 in Cape Town, experts from all over the world including the U.S., India, Italy, Brazil and Russia, were able to exchange information and discuss potential advances in the field. “Neutralizing antibodies,” antibodies capable of preventing a virus from infecting a cell by inhibiting its biological effect, was discussed as the new method in AIDS prevention. According to Reuters, the conference followed a year full of various setbacks to AIDS vaccine research. Because of the conference, research will now focus on the laboratory studies of antibody production and prevention of infection. Lynn Morris, head of the AIDS unit in South Africa, commented that “there’s a real redirection and rethinking” about the cause and treatment of AIDS in this country. The government has been controversial in its stance on AIDS, supporting nutritional foods as a treatment for the disease instead of anti-retroviral medicines. The HIV/AIDS crisis presently facing South Africans is the main cause of death in the country and more than ten percent of the entire population is currently HIV positive. (IOL, October 16; Kaiser, October 14; Medical News Today, October 17; Reuters, October 12; Time, October 15)

Despite ANC turmoil, Zuma addresses unemployment issue. Jacob Zuma, leader of the ruling African National Congress party (ANC) and future presidential hopeful, has recently stated that “the most pressing challenge in South Africa is that of unemployment.” According to Agence France Press, over 40 percent of South Africa’s population is living on less than two dollars a day. Zuma addressed the members of the ANC and left-leaning allies October 17 to discuss this major problem facing South Africans. This meeting was a kick-off to a series of economic talks, viewed as a move furthering Zuma’s presidential run. Zuma stated that the government would need to provide proper education and training of individuals so that they could find jobs: “Where people are not suitably educated or skilled, the chances are very high that they will forever remain trapped in a low-wage, exploitative jobs or not get any jobs at all.” Zuma’s plan seemed to trouble investors, however, and some worry that he will allow his trade union and communist allies to steer the economy in a different direction. An increase in government intervention to restructure the economy was called for on October 19 at an ANC, COSATU labor federation and Communist Party meeting. Parties present at the meeting pledged to create a macroeconomic policy that would support economic growth and domestic employment. Zuma is slated to meet with U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice October 20-25 to discuss this problem, as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country. These political measures come after the ANC has been going through the worst turmoil in its 96-

year history. Mosiuoa Lekota, former ANC chairman, announced that the breakaway faction of the ANC would form a new political party on December 16, according to *The Star*. ([AFP](#), October 17; [Bloomberg](#), October 20; [LA Times](#), October 20; [Reuters](#), October 17, 19, 2008)

## **UGANDA**

Uganda voted non-permanent UN Security Council Member. The United Nations General Assembly elected Uganda, along with Austria, Japan, Mexico and Turkey to serve as non-permanent members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2009. Ugandan diplomatic officials have suggested the country will use its position on the council to place increased pressure on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group, which has terrorized northern Uganda for more than two decades. Intermittent peace talks between the government of Uganda and the LRA began in July 2006, and have led to a ceasefire, but their ultimate conclusion remains uncertain. Currently, the LRA has been most active in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), near the south Sudan border, and according to reports released from MONUC, the UN Peacekeeping Mission in DRC, the LRA has been accused of killing at least 52 people, and abducting another 159 children and 10 adults since mid-September. Uganda may also use its position on the Security Council to push to expand the mandates of MONUC, the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, and of UNMIS, the mission in southern Sudan, to allow them to go after the Lord's Resistance Army. Of the 53 countries in Africa, three non-permanent seats are shared between four regional groups – West and North Africa each receives their own seat, while East and South Africa share the other. With an endorsement from the Africa Union, Uganda has been voted to replace South Africa after a 26 year absence from the Security Council chamber. ([MONUC](#), October 10, [UN News](#), October 17; [SABC](#), October 18; [VOA](#), October 16, 2008)

More than 5,000 Congolese refugees flee into Uganda. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported October 18 that 5,680 Congolese have crossed over into Uganda due to the renewed fighting in the North Kivu region in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Of the 5,680 Congolese refugees, 4,000 people have settled in villages along the border in the district of Kisoro. The remaining 1,680 refugees have arrived in Nakivale refugee settlement in Isingiro district. At the moment, the new arrivals say that they are not in need of assistance, as they are cared for by the Ugandan population hosting them. UNHCR spokesperson, Robert Russo, said the refugees “would not move from the villages along the border to a transit site that UNHCR could establish in Nyakabanda, 15km from the DRC border, as they want to be as close as possible to their homes in DRC and cross everyday to check on their properties and get water and food items.” However, UNHCR is concerned about the capacity of the small health centers within the border villages, along with the food reserves, because with the presence of an additional 4,000 people, and the continued fighting in the DRC, the local population may run out of food if the number of refugees continue to increase. According to UNHCR, there are plans to coordinate with the district and central governments as well as with other humanitarian actors to see how best to support the local and refugee population. UNHCR is planning to have a mass information campaign within Kisoro district to educate the refugees on their rights and the assistance they would receive in the Nakivale refugee settlement. While speaking about the Congolese refugee situation, Uganda Disaster Preparedness Minister Musa Ecweru said “These are human beings, and they are not coming for a holiday, they are coming because they are persecuted. We must receive them and treat them as human beings whether or not we have resources and capacity.” UNHCR, the Ugandan government, and other humanitarian actors are working to update a contingency plan so that they can be prepared to provide an effective and timely response for the potential large-scale influxes of

Congolese refugees. Uganda has a strong legal framework for protecting the rights of refugees, but some argue that the country is lacking in its ability to execute the laws. The total refugee population in Uganda is 146,407. ([AFP](#), October 19; [AP](#), October 18; [IRIN](#), October 21, 2008)