



**Peace & Justice Update**  
**March 2, 2007**  
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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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***The Peace & Justice Updates are written by the Spring 2007 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego. The interns are Rebecca Deedman, Nick Diamond, Daniela Loor, and Gabriella Stumpf. All are seniors at the University of San Diego.***

ADNKI	=	ADNKI ( <a href="http://www.adnki.com">www.adnki.com</a> )
AfricaFocus	=	AfricaFocus ( <a href="http://www.africafocus.org">www.africafocus.org</a> )
AFP	=	Agence France-Presse ( <a href="http://www.afp.com">www.afp.com</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> )
Asian Tribune	=	Asian Tribune ( <a href="http://www.asiantribune.com">www.asiantribune.com</a> )
AP	=	Associated Press ( <a href="http://www.ap.org">www.ap.org</a> )
B92	=	B92 Net ( <a href="http://www.b92.net/eng/">www.b92.net/eng/</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 News ( <a href="http://www.bloomberg.com">http://www.bloomberg.com</a> )
CBC News	=	CBC News ( <a href="http://www.cbc.ca">www.cbc.ca</a> )
CIA	=	CIA - The World Factbook ( <a href="http://www.cia.gov">www.cia.gov</a> )
EU	=	European Union ( <a href="http://www.europa.eu.int">www.europa.eu.int</a> )
Guardian	=	Guardian Unlimited Network ( <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk">www.guardian.co.uk</a> )
HRW	=	Human Rights Watch ( <a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</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> )
IndiaTimes	=	India Times ( <a href="http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com">www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com</a> )
Independent	=	The Independent ( <a href="http://www.independent.co.uk">www.independent.co.uk</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> )
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> )
Khaleej Times	=	Khaleej Times ( <a href="http://www.khaleejtimes.com">www.khaleejtimes.com</a> )
Jurist	=	The Jurist ( <a href="http://jurist.law.pitt.edu">http://jurist.law.pitt.edu</a> )
LA Times	=	Los Angeles Times ( <a href="http://www.latimes.com">www.latimes.com</a> )
Makfax	=	Macedonian Independent News Agency ( <a href="http://www.makfax.com">www.makfax.com</a> )
Monitor	=	The Monitor ( <a href="http://www.monitor.co.ug">www.monitor.co.ug</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 Vision	=	New Vision ( <a href="http://www.newvision.co.ug">www.newvision.co.ug</a> )
New Zealand Herald	=	The New Zealand Herald ( <a href="http://www.nzherald.co.nz">www.nzherald.co.nz</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> )
PANA	=	Panafrican News Agency ( <a href="http://www.panapress.com">www.panapress.com</a> )
Oxfam Great Britain	=	Oxfam Great Britain ( <a href="http://www.oxfam.org.uk">www.oxfam.org.uk</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> )
SEAPA	=	Southeast Asian Press Alliance ( <a href="http://www.seapabkk.org">www.seapabkk.org</a> )
SERBIANNA	=	Serbianna.com ( <a href="http://www.serbianna.com">www.serbianna.com</a> )
SMH	=	Sydney Morning Herald ( <a href="http://www.smh.com">www.smh.com</a> )
ST	=	Sudan Tribune ( <a href="http://www.sudantribune.com">www.sudantribune.com</a> )
UN News Center	=	UN News Center Homepage ( <a href="http://www.un.org">www.un.org</a> )
UNESCO	=	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization ( <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a> )
UNHCHR	=	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ( <a href="http://www.unhcr.ch">www.unhcr.ch</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> )
Xinhua	=	Xinhua News Agency ( <a href="http://www.xinhuanet.com/english">www.xinhuanet.com/english</a> )
WP	=	The Washington Post ( <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a> )
Web India	=	Web India ( <a href="http://www.webindia123.com">www.webindia123.com</a> )

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### **AFGHANISTAN**

Suicide bomber attacks military base during Cheney's visit: A suicide bomber attacked the main gate of Bagram Air Base February 27 during an unplanned visit by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, killing 23 and injuring 20 but leaving the Vice President unharmed. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, and Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi declared that suicide bomber Mullah Abdul Rahim had targeted Cheney with the blast. Cheney arrived in Afghanistan after postponing a February 26 meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai due to bad weather. After the attacks, he was taken to a bomb shelter before meeting with Karzai in Kabul to discuss America's commitment to the region and problems with Pakistani cooperation. Afghanistan has experienced an increase in cross-border infiltration by militants, whose attacks in Afghanistan have led many Afghans to question the commitment of Pakistani intelligence services to securing the border. The bombing underscored the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and specifically the resurgence of the Taliban. Taliban militants have carried out 139 suicide bombings in the last year in a fivefold increase from 2005. The Bush administration has recently pledged \$10.6 billion in aid for new police and army equipment. The U.S. has supported the Afghan government since 2001, when U.S. and British-led forces ousted the Taliban regime. (BBC, February 27, NYT, February 26; 27; WP, February 27, 2007).

Immunity bill passes in Afghanistan's upper house of Congress: A controversial amnesty bill was passed February 20 by the Afghan Congress and now awaits President Hamid Karzai's approval before passing into law. Karzai is known to oppose the "National Stability and Reconciliation" bill that would grant immunity to those accused of human rights violations committed in the last 25 years, but is under pressure to sign it. More than 25,000 people, many of them implicated in war crimes, rallied February 25 in Kabul to show support for the legislation and encourage President Hamid Karzai to approve it. While many of the bill's supporters, including cabinet members and high-ranking government officials, claim that it would encourage various factions to work more closely together in the future, the United Nations and Afghan as well as international human rights groups have criticized the bill stating that it would infringe on the Afghan constitution and marginalize thousands of Afghan human rights abuse victims. The lower house passed the bill January 31 in response to a December 12, 2006 Human Rights Watch report that called for Afghan authorities to hold human rights offenders accountable for their crimes. Having signed a 2005 "Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice" to implement a transitional justice process by 2009, Karzai initially announced that he would not support the immunity bill, stating that only the victims of the crimes could grant amnesty to the accused. Other critics have argued that the bill disregards the Constitution's call for a society "based on social justice, protection of human dignity and of human rights," prompting Karzai to suggest that the 12-point bill be harmonized with the constitution. If Karzai rejects the law, the lower house can override his veto with a two-thirds majority vote, and if he fails to take further action in 15 days, the bill would become law. Over 69 percent of Afghans suffered from human rights violations during the tumultuous period from 1979-2001 that killed over one million people. (IRIN, February 26, 2007).

### **GUATEMALA**

Jailed Guatemalan policemen killed in prison riot: A 12-hour prison riot in the maximum-security Boqueron prison left four jailed policemen dead February 25. Rioting inmates took the warden and other prison officials hostage before gunmen, allegedly dressed as security guards, shot the victims multiple times. Inmates held the officials hostage until a contingent of 50 riot police were able to suppress the uprising. Most of the prison's inmates are members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang, which is deeply involved in drug trafficking. The victims, who included Luis Arturo Herrera, head of the Guatemalan National Police organized crime unit, had been arrested for the February 19 murders of three Salvadoran members of the Central America Parliament and their driver. Among the diplomats

was Eduardo D'Aubuisson, son of former right-wing leader Roberto D'Aubuisson. Investigators stated that the February 19 murders were either politically motivated or linked to the region's powerful drug and crime gangs, while El Salvador's police chief suggested that the prison shootings were meant to prevent the policemen from implicating anyone else in the February 19 murders. In response to the chain of shootings, Guatemalan President Oscar Berger ordered an investigation into corruption in the country's police force. Guatemala's 36-year civil war was characterized by state-sponsored violence and widespread human rights abuses, and killed over 200,000 people. Corruption and drug trafficking within Guatemala is still present and U.S. officials estimate that 75 percent of the cocaine that has reached the U.S. has passed through Guatemala. (BBC, February 26; NYT; WP, February 27, 2007).

President Berger pleads for commission against impunity: Guatemalan President Oscar Berger urged Congress February 27 to approve a proposed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which is meant to address corruption in the National Civilian Police force. Berger stated that the recent shootings policemen jailed in connection with the recent murders of four Salvadorans, as well as evidence indicating the widespread influence of organized crime, have increased the country's need to use all its available resources to combat crime. Berger instructed his cabinet members to present Congressional President Rubén Darío Morales with an initiative that would establish the CICIG. Morales appeared optimistic about the bill, which has gained widespread support and would be ratified as a matter of national emergency if passed. On December 12, 2006, the United Nations and the Guatemalan government signed an agreement to establish just such an independent commission to investigate illegally armed groups. The Commission, headed by the U.N. and supported by international investigators, would assist members of the judiciary in prosecuting the clandestine groups in local courts. Berger also announced that his administration would continue the investigation of the February 19 murders of three Salvadoran parliamentarians and their driver and would use all its available resources to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. His comments come amid the February 25 killing of four jailed policemen, who were shot while being held for the assassination of the Salvadorans. Guatemala has been plagued with government corruption and state-sponsored violence, both of which were prevalent throughout its 36-year civil war in which 200,000 people were killed. (PrensaLibre, February 28, 2007).

## **KOSOVO**

War crimes suspects arrested: Serbian police have arrested four suspects implicated in the 1999 killing of ethnic Albanian guerrillas who had participated in the Kosovo insurgency. The suspects, all former or current Serb policemen, were apprehended February 25 and charged with involvement in the execution of three U.S.-Albanian brothers who had strayed into Serb-controlled territory during the conflict. After being imprisoned for seventeen days for having illegally entered the territory, Argo, Mehmet and Ilaj Bytyci were abducted by secret police, transported to another location, bound, and shot. Their bodies were recovered during a 2000 excavation of mass graves in Serbia, after which investigations by Serbian officials and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) led to the November 2006 trials of two former policemen and an ICTY indictment for then-police chief Vlastimir Djordjevic. The latest round of arrests connected with the case included the detention of a police colonel currently serving as deputy commander of the gendarmerie. Thousands of ethnic Albanians were killed or displaced by Serb police and military forces in a 1999 interethnic conflict in Kosovo that claimed 10,000 lives and displaced 200,000. (WP, February 28, 2007)

U.N. talks deadlocked: Refusal by Serbian and Kosovo diplomats to compromise over the status of Kosovo has stalled a final round of United Nations-sponsored talks. The talks, begun February 20 in Vienna, have brought together delegations from both Serbia and Kosovo to review a February 2 U.N. proposal to grant the southernmost Serbian province limited statehood, but negotiators have failed to make headway toward a final agreement. The proposal, authored by U.N. special envoy Martti

Ahtisaari, would allow Kosovo to establish its own constitution, flag and national anthem and to apply for membership in international organizations. While the plan has been broadly accepted by Kosovo, which sees it as an intermediate step toward full-fledged independence, Serbian diplomats have rejected it on the grounds that it violates Serbia's territorial integrity. Belgrade offered an alternative plan that would grant "extensive autonomy" to Kosovo while reaffirming its provincial status, but Kosovo's delegation responded by reiterating its demands for full independence. Ahtisaari, who is hosting the Vienna talks, issued a warning February 21 that failure to reach a final decision soon could jeopardize the security situation in Kosovo, which has already been threatened by recent demonstrations by both ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians. Kosovo has been governed as a U.N. protectorate since a 78-day NATO bombing campaign that ended the 1999 conflict between Kosovo's Serb and Albanian populations. (WP, February 21, 2007)

Turmoil in Serbia over Kosovo issue: Deadlock over issue of Kosovo's status has prevented Serbia from forming a new government and may force re-elections following January 21 parliamentary elections in which no majority party emerged. While the right-wing Serbian Radical Party won a plurality of votes in the January elections, it has been unable to form a majority coalition and is expected to be superseded by a coalition between the pro-Western Democratic Party (DS) and Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). However, the two parties, both of which are involved in ongoing talks on the status of Kosovo, have not been able to reach an agreement on a new government. While both oppose Kosovo independence, the DSS has been accused of using the talks as an excuse to stall negotiations on the formation of a government in which they would be forced to relinquish the post of Prime Minister. New elections will be held if the parties fail to reach an agreement by mid-May. Meanwhile, 15,000 Serbs demonstrated February 27 in protest of a United Nations proposal to grant Kosovo limited independence. Marching outside the U.S. embassy in Belgrade, protestors carried banners urging Russia and China to veto the proposal at the U.N. Security Council, where it will be reviewed if the current talks do not yield an agreement. Presented February 2 by U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, the proposal would allow Kosovo to govern itself and be recognized as an independent state, but only under European Union oversight. While Kosovo Albanians, who constitute an ethnic majority in the province, have broadly accepted the plan, Serbia and Kosovo Serbs have rejected what they see as a threat to Serb autonomy in Kosovo. Kosovo is a province of Serbia, but has remained under U.N. control since NATO bombing ended a 1999 Serbian counterinsurgency movement that killed over 10,000. (WP, February 23, 27, 2007)

## **NEPAL**

Government to seize royal property: Nepal's multiparty government has set up a high-level committee to suggest ways in which royal property, including that acquired by King Gyanendra, could be nationalized. Junior information minister Dilendra Prasad Badu said, "We have appointed a three-member team to collect the details of property earned by King Gyanendra after he ascended the throne and recommend procedures to nationalize it," adding that the king would be allowed to retain the property he owned before he was crowned. Badu, who is also the committee spokesman, said that "it is expected that there are huge amounts of land and other assets" which would be used for a charity trust. King Gyanendra ascended to power in 2001 after Prince Dipendra massacred ten members of the royal family including his father King Birendra (Gyanendra's brother), and himself. A popular uprising in April 2006 forced the king to give up power to a seven-party alliance backed by Maoists, and he has since been stripped of all his powers. (BBC; Reuters, February 27, 2007)

Government and Maoists discuss interim government and Constituent Assembly elections: The government and the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist) discussed at a meeting held Wednesday in Kathmandu the soon-to-be-formed interim government and the Constituent Assembly promised for mid-June. The government stated February 27 that the formation of an interim government had been

delayed because the arms management and monitoring process for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), armed wing of the Maoists, had yet to be completed. Meanwhile, the CPN-Maoist argued that the government had been delaying the interim government for no apparent reason, since his party had met all of the pre-conditions. At a February 27 rally in Nepaljung, a town located in the southern Terai region, Maoist Chairman Prachanda said, "Once the Nepali Congress, [the Unified Marxist-Leninist party] and the Maoists unite, we will have the two-third[s] majority and the republic will be announced." Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula stated that the Kathmandu talks, were focused on the management of the Maoist fighters' cantonments. After the February 28 meeting with the government, Prachanda said his party would join the government once the eight parties had reached a "respectful" consensus regarding the distribution of the ministerial portfolios. Sitaula went on to say that the date for the mid-June elections would be announced Thursday. The seven-party alliance and the Maoists have pledged to hold the Constituent Assembly elections, which would rewrite Nepal's constitution, in mid-June. In accordance with a November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord, the Maoists have agreed to sequester their troops and lock up their guns under UN supervision, while the Nepalese Army has agreed to confining a large number of their soldiers to barracks. (Kantipur, February 27, 28, 2007)

## **SOMALIA**

Pirates arrested for ship hijacking: Authorities in Somalia's Puntland region have arrested four pirates implicated in the February 25 hijacking of a United Nations-chartered cargo ship. The pirates, who were apprehended February 27 after coming ashore for supplies, are part of a gang of eight that seized control of the MZ Rozen after it had delivered food aid to northern Somalia. The remaining four pirates are currently holding the ship and its twelve crew members hostage, and have begun negotiations with the Puntland authorities and the U.N. World Food Program, which is responsible for the aid effort. Somali police boats and a U.S. military vessel have headed toward to the MZ Rozen, but have refrained from attacking the pirates out of concern for the crew's safety. The hijacking underscores the violence and lawlessness that has plagued Somalia in the months since the December 26 ousting of the Union of Islamic Courts, which had imposed law and order in the country during their term of rule. During the six months that they governed Somalia, the Courts effectively stopped piracy and street violence, both of which had been rampant before the Courts' takeover. Since the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) assumed power, violence has been escalating throughout the country, especially in Mogadishu where insurgents stage daily rocket attacks at civilians and police and military forces. Prior to the Courts, Somalia had not had a government since the 1991 overthrow of President Mohamed Siad Barre plunged the country into lawlessness and chaos. The TFG, the fourteenth attempt to constitute a government since Barre's deposition, established itself in Baidoa in May 2006 and relocated to Mogadishu after the Courts' ousting. (BBC, February 26, 2007; BBC, February 27, 2007; WP, February 26, 2007; WP, February 27, 2007).

Warnings about Somalia violence issued: Both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf have issued statements drawing attention to the escalating violence that is claiming an increasing number of civilian lives. In its February 24 statement, the ICRC expressed concern for mounting civilian casualties in street battles between government and insurgent forces. The comments follow one of the deadliest weeks of fighting since the start of the violence, in which attacks killed at least ten Mogadishu residents, hospitalized over 430, and prompted thousands to flee the capital city. Meanwhile, President Yusuf warned that the violence in Somalia could spill over into neighboring countries if left unchecked. Speaking at a February 26 conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Yusuf suggested that assistance was necessary to stabilize the situation and prevent the conflict from spreading throughout the Horn of Africa. Yusuf also praised Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi for his commitment to helping Somalia, and secured pledges of assistance from Sudanese and Yemeni heads of state. The African Union plans to deploy 8,000 troops to Somalis in an effort to

stabilize the country, which has been plagued by lawlessness and rampant violence since the December 26 ouster of Islamists by Ethiopian forces aligned with Yusuf's Transitional Federal Government. (BBC, February 24, 2007; NYT, February 26, 2007).

## **SRI LANKA**

Diplomats, security forces and civilian injured in mortar attack by Tamil Tigers: United States ambassador Robert Blake and Italian ambassador Pio Mariani were injured in a February 27 mortar attack while attending a development meeting in the eastern city of Batticaloa. Tamil Tigers claimed responsibility for the attacks, which were directed at the ambassadors' helicopter as a response to earlier government attacks on the rebels. According to Seevaratnam Puleethevan, head of the peace secretariat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the government was obligated to give advance notice that foreign dignitaries were visiting the conflict area. The Sri Lankan government admitted it had failed to give such notice, but military spokesman Upali Rajapaksa asserted that notification of the ambassadors' visit was unnecessary given that the LTTE was most likely well aware of their presence in Batticaloa. While neither diplomat was badly harmed, Mariani was treated for head wounds and Blake suffered mild injuries and was taken to Colombo. In addition, several security personnel and a civilian were injured. Sri Lanka's air force retaliated by bombing eastern parts of the country where it suspected rebels were positioned. The incident exacerbated tensions between the LTTE and government of Sri Lanka, which have been festering since a 2002 ceasefire began deteriorating soon after it was signed. (BBC; Bloomberg, February 27, 2007).

Indian state of Tamil Nadu cautions against LTTE rebel activity: Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu state Kalaingar M. Karunanidhi, the southern Indian state, has warned both political leaders and individuals involved with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that severe action will be taken against anyone who participates in further terrorism against the Sri Lankan government and civilians. After the LTTE assassinated Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, India banned the rebels and labeled them terrorists. Chief Minister Karunanidhi and his party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, have traditionally shown sympathy for the Tamil Tigers, but Karunanidhi stressed that this sympathy is not synonymous with support for their acts of terrorism. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that security agencies have recently seized large reserves of arms, ammunition and bomb-making supplies at the sea between the state of Tamil Nadu and the northwestern tip of Sri Lanka, which spans a distance of approximately one hundred miles. Security agencies speculated that these caches belonged to the LTTE and were meant for use against the Sri Lankan government. Although Tamil Nadu contains a strong Tamil presence, the rebels have lost the support of the state's 60 million residents since the 1991 death of Prime Minister Gandhi. The LTTE's demands for a separate Tamil state have been rejected by the Sinhalese-dominated government, and the civil war that has persisted since 1983 has created a substantial Tamil diaspora. (BBC, February 23, 2007).

## **SUDAN**

Sudan rejects ICC's naming of Darfur war suspects: Sudanese government officials have issued a statement disputing the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s authority and asserting that the country's judiciary is sufficient for trying its own criminals. After determining that the Sudanese judiciary is unwilling to try war criminals, the Court made a bold move by formally declaring Sudanese Humanitarian Affairs Minister Ahmed Haroun and Janjaweed militia leader Ali Muhammad Ali Abd al-Rahman to be war criminals. The men face allegations of involvement in a combined fifty-one offenses, including mass murder, rape and torture perpetrated in the villages of West Darfur. Sudan refuses to extradite the two men. Chief ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has requested that summons be issued for the two men based on evidence from a two-year investigation by the United Nations, which linked Haroun and al-Rahman to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2003 and 2004.

Moreno-Ocampo cited evidence indicating that Darfur's worst atrocities were committed by Sudanese government officials, namely Haroun, rather than by rogue Arab militias. He also cited evidence that Haroun had personally recruited, funded, and armed the Arab Janjaweed militia in order for them to kill civilians. The Court accused al-Rahman, a former colonel in the Sudanese army, of giving orders in 2003 to rape, kill and torture village. Haroun continues to serve as a minister in the Sudanese government, while al-Rahman is thought to be in custody of the Sudanese government in connection with other crimes. The ICC accusations may further strain relations between Sudan and the international community, which have deteriorated since the 2003 Darfur conflict broke out. ([BBC](#), February 27; [LA Times](#), February 28, 2007).

President Omar al-Bashir addresses U.S. conference charging U.S. with exaggerating Sudanese conflict: President Hassan Omar al-Bashir has responded to media reports citing hundreds of thousands of Sudanese deaths by rejecting accusations of ethnic cleansing and casualties and stating that foreign assistance for Darfur would be limited to operations that refrain from violating Sudan's sovereignty. Al-Bashir directed his comments via teleconference at a Detroit meeting of the Nation of Islam, an American Muslim organization, after being invited by its leader, Louis Farrakhan. Al-Bashir deliberately targeted his statements at a United States audience as part of his campaign to end what he sees as exaggerations of the number of civilian casualties by the media. The president suggested that figures were being distorted by a factor of tens of thousands of deaths. He also rejected allegations of ethnic cleansing, stating that "talks of Arabs killing blacks is a lie," and accused the international community of putting unnecessary pressure on his government. Al-Bashir warned against any movement by foreign governments to topple his government, and demanded that the sovereignty and unity of Sudan not be jeopardized by international intervention. Tensions between Khartoum and the global community have continued to escalate since the beginning of the war in Darfur in 2003. ([BBC](#), February 24, 2007).

## **UGANDA**

Fear heightens as truce lapses: The truce signed August 2006 between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) expired at midnight February 28. The pact, which was intended to conclude December of last year, had been extended until February 28 with the purpose of establishing an end to the brutal twenty-year war in northern Uganda. The LRA has refused to resume talks unless a change of venue outside Sudan is decided. LRA Deputy Commander Vincent Otti said, "We are not going to renew anything ... The truce is just a playing tactic of the government while they renew military operations against us. Why renew the agreement if they are not respecting [it]?" Otti also said that while the LRA had no plans to resume hostilities, they would strike back in self-defence and would happily sign an extension of the truce if another venue was chosen. Although both sides have been expected to honor the truce, they have also accused each other of violations. The government has said the LRA failed to gather at two agreed assembly points inside Southern Sudan; the rebels have said the Ugandan army used the meeting points to besiege them and attack their fighters. Late on Tuesday, President Yoweri Museveni warned military operations against the LRA were still possible, saying "Peace in Uganda will be maintained with or without peace talks." He went on to say that "talks were mainly for the benefit of the terrorists," adding that "if they don't give in, that will be their problem." The nongovernmental organization Save the Children called on the international community to insist that both parties take "urgent and extraordinary measures to ensure a peaceful resolution," noting that the majority of the fighters within the LRA ranks were children. The LRA pulled out of peace talks with the government in Southern Sudan's capital Juba last month, citing security fears after Sudanese President Hassan Omar al-Bashir threatened to "get rid of the LRA from Sudan." ([IRIN](#), February 28; [Monitor](#), March 1; [Reuters](#), [NYT](#), February 28, 2007).

Government sets terms for change of peace talks venue: The government said February 28 that it could not begin to discuss, let alone approve a change of venue for the stalled peace talks, if the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) negotiators did not return to Juba. State Minister for Defense Ruth Nankabirwa said, "We have to return to Juba [to] discuss [the demand] and then agree or disagree ... we cannot go to Nairobi or any other place to agree to a venue. It is Juba we have to talk about because there is no other venue that has been chosen." Members of Parliament (MP) voted on a motion that compelled the LRA and the government to return to Juba and nowhere else. Members of the opposition, who originally constructed the motion, declined to vote saying it was wrong for Parliament to limit the negotiating parties to Juba. Opposition MP Alice Alaso of Soroti District in northeastern Uganda stated, "It is not for us to dictate on the venue because in negotiations all parties are presumed to be equal and for us to side with one party [the government] would defeat the essence of this motion." Ugandan Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda held that the government was satisfied with "the way the talks were being mediated," and charged nongovernmental organizations of lobbying on behalf of the LRA for a venue change. (Monitor, March 1, 2007).

