



**Peace & Justice Update**  
**March 9, 2007**  
**(Volume 15, Number 4)**

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> )
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	=	Panfrican 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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## UPDATES

### AFGHANISTAN

U.S. military actions result in civilian deaths: On March 4 the United States military dropped two 2,000 pound bombs on a compound in central Afghanistan, northeast of Kabul, killing five women and three children. The U.S. forces called for the airstrike upon observing two men who had left the scene of a rocket fire attack on the U.S. Tape Ahmed Beg base entering the compound carrying AK-47s. General Muhammad Eiwaz Masloom, police chief of Kapisa Province where the base is located, blamed Afghanistan's enemies for trying to destroy the peace and stability in the area and for endangering civilians by attacking coalition forces in populated areas. The bombings sparked outcry from the nongovernmental organization Human Rights Watch (HRW). John Sifton, a senior researcher at HRW said that the U.S. attack was disproportionate to the event, and he expressed concern over the level of force used by coalition troops. The bombing occurred shortly after American forces in eastern Afghanistan opened fire on a highway and left 16 civilians dead and 24 wounded. The shootings came in reaction to a suicide car bombing that took place next to a U.S. convoy which killed 10 people and injured 25. Local Afghans protested the shootings by blocking the highway and witnesses claimed that American forces fired indiscriminately on vehicles and pedestrians. President Hamid Karzai condemned the killing of the civilians and ordered a joint Afghan and U.S. investigation. Even though American troops have been in Afghanistan since ousting the Taliban from power in 2001, civilian casualties have increased in the last year due to a renewal of insurgent attacks in the southeastern region of the country. (NYT, March 5, 2007)

NATO forces fight back insurgency in southern Afghanistan: Afghan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces launched a large military operation March 6 in the northern part of Helmand province to combat the growing insurgency that has plagued the area in recent months. The Afghan government together with Helmand's governor, Asadullah Wafa, requested the operation, claiming that 700 al Qaeda fighters under Pakistani rebel leader Abdullah Massoud have been operating in the region with impunity due to the government's inability to exert authority. Operation Achilles, whose immediate goal would be to secure an area where international aid organizations had tried to work on an electricity project and were forced out of due to instability, would involve 4,500 NATO and 1,000 Afghan soldiers. Operation Achilles followed nine months after Operation Mountain Thrust which took place in northern Helmand as well. Despite the operation, there has been an increase in poppy production and militants have managed to gain control of four districts within the province. U.S. forces have been operating in Afghanistan since they overthrew the Taliban in 2001 but the past month has seen an increase in the number of Taliban and al Qaeda related attacks. (WP, March 6, 2007)

### GUATEMALA

High ranking government officials offer resignation: Guatemalan Interior Minister Carlos Vielmann and police chief Edwin Sperisen offered their resignations to Congress on March 7 in the wake of a deepening scandal surrounding the February 19 assassinations of three Salvadoran diplomats and their driver. Four Guatemalan policemen were arrested in connection with the killings and held at a high security prison where they were murdered during a riot February 25. Victor Rosales, the prison system's director, consequently submitted his resignation. Shortly after the riot, a judge ordered the arrest of 24 prison guards including that of its director. Rosales, Vielmann and Sperisen were scheduled to testify to Congress and answer questions concerning the assassinations. The day before Vielmann's resignation, President Oscar Berger had given the Interior Ministry 15 days to develop a series of rules that would make it easier to fire police officials accused of crimes. Vielmann had stated that he wanted more demanding requirements at the police academy, requiring a high school degree instead of a only a middle school education. These recent events have pressured Berger to order a purge of corrupt officers from police forces, advocating the creation of an International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala that would investigate organized crime and corruption within the police force. In the

aftermath of Guatemala's 36-year civil war, which claimed over 200,000 lives before peace accords were signed in 1996, common crime has increased significantly. Rogue police—who persecute victims ranging from suspected criminals to street children—have correspondingly also become an increasing problem. (AP, March 5; Boston Herald, March 6; Baku Today, March 7, 2007)

Guatemala murders reveal police corruption: Marvin Roberto Contreras Natareno, one of the two remaining suspects in the murder of three Salvadoran parliamentarians and their driver, turned himself in to Guatemalan authorities February 28. Contreras Natareno, an investigator at the police organized crime unit, admitted to having abetted the diplomats' assassinations on February 19. Guatemalan, Salvadoran and U.S. forces have met to investigate the murders of the Salvadorans and the four jailed policemen who were killed February 25 at El Boquerón prison. Many questions remain unanswered regarding the motive for the assassination. The policemen who confessed claimed they believed that the Salvadoran victims had been drug dealers. Their arrest incited criticism of the Guatemalan National Police, raising questions regarding the connections between drug dealers and police authorities. President Oscar Berger and the United Nations proposed an international commission to purge the police force of corruption and to investigate human rights abuses. Berger also said that he would ask United States president George W. Bush to provide radar equipment, helicopters and planes when Bush visited March 12. Erwin Sperisen, the national police chief, has denied the existence of death squads—unofficial police that combat crime by performing extrajudicial, clandestine assassinations—but admitted there were corrupt officers within the department. Many have argued that the alleged rogue police officers emerged as an eventual consequence of Guatemala's 36-year civil war that resulted in more than 200,000 deaths. (AP, March 5, 2007)

## **KOSOVO**

Haradinaj trial begins: The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague began proceedings against former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj for his role in atrocities committed in the 1999 Kosovo conflict. Haradinaj, a senior leader of the guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the conflict, and codefendants Idriz Blaj and Lahi Brahimaj each face 37 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The three have pled not guilty to the charges, which stem from allegations of their involvement in the murder, rape and torture of ethnic Serbs, Roma and Albanians during the fighting, and each could face life imprisonment if convicted of any charge. Haradinaj, the highest-ranking Kosovo Albanian to stand trial at the ICTY, was elected Prime Minister of Kosovo in 2005 but resigned shortly after his indictment. After surrendering himself to the tribunal, he was granted provisional release and allowed to continue his involvement in Kosovo politics, through which he has become known as an influential advocate of moderation and diplomacy. As he returned to The Hague February 23, Haradinaj urged Kosovo Albanians to remain patient with the ongoing United Nations-sponsored negotiations to grant Kosovo limited statehood, which have generated unrest in the province in past weeks. The ICTY was established in 1994 to prosecute perpetrators of human rights abuses during the Bosnia war, and its mandate was later extended to include crimes committed in the 1999 Kosovo conflict. Kosovo, a province of Serbia, has been administered by the U.N. since the cessation of hostilities between minority ethnic Serbs and majority ethnic Albanians. (BBC; NYT, March 5, 2007).

Further unrest in Kosovo: Kosovar Albanians demonstrated March 3 for the second time within the past month against a United Nations-sponsored proposal to grant Kosovo limited statehood. Thousands of protestors marched through the streets of Pristina to express their disapproval of the U.N. proposal—which many claim does not go far enough in making the Serbian province independent—and with the general performance of U.N. personnel. The proposal, presented February 2 by U.N. special envoy Martti Ahtisaari, grants Kosovo the right to establish its own flag, constitution and national anthem, and to apply for membership in international organizations, but without ending U.N. oversight of the province. Ahtisaari is hosting ongoing negotiations over the proposal in Vienna,

Austria, but little progress has been made between the Serbian and Kosovar delegations toward an agreement on Kosovo's status. If the Vienna talks do not bear results, the proposal may be presented before the U.N. Security Council for final approval, but Serbian ally Russia has threatened to veto it. Most Kosovar Albanians accept the plan, which they see as a step toward eventual full independence. However, the growing unrest in Kosovo indicates the importance of resolving the status issue. The March 3 protests were the second protests by Kosovo Albanians, and the third held in Kosovo since Ahtisaari presented his proposal. Despite the growing tension in the region, the March 3 protests were more peaceful than those held on February 10, which resulted in the deaths of two demonstrators, police raids on pro-independence advocacy group Vetevendosje, and resignations by the Kosovo Interior Minister and the U.N. chief of police for Kosovo. Kosovo has been administered by the U.N. since 1999, when a NATO bombing campaign ended fighting between ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians. (NYT, March 4, 2007).

## **SOMALIA**

African Union peacekeepers greeted by mortar attacks: Mortar rounds fired March 6 at the Mogadishu airport injured one and scattered participants in a ceremony to welcome the first troops of an African Union stabilization mission. The 400 arriving troops, all Ugandan, were the vanguard of the United Nations-sponsored A.U. mission that has been sent to help pacify Somalia in the midst of increasing lawlessness that has engulfed the country since the December 26 ouster of Islamists. The initial Ugandan troops are part of the over 1,600 troops committed by Uganda, which is expected to be the biggest contributor to the mission. The entire Ugandan force departed for Somalia last week after being seen off by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who stated that the mission will help the fledgling Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to assert its authority and will train a Somali national army, but will not engage in any fighting. The mission was expected to replace Ethiopian troops, which have occupied Somalia since helping the TFG to oust the Union of Islamic Courts and have been steadily withdrawing from the country since January 23. Yet even with the large troop contribution by Uganda and similar commitments by Burundi, Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria, the mission currently falls well short of the 8,000 troops called for by the A.U. The March 6 mortar attacks underscore the challenges the short-handed mission faces in helping to restore stability and the rule of law to Mogadishu, where near-daily rocket attacks by insurgents have killed civilians and prompted an exodus from the city. Somalia has lacked an effective government since 1991, when warlords overthrew President Mohamed Siad Barre. Islamists took power briefly in 2006 and quelled the ensuing anarchy by imposing Sharia law, but were ousted by TFG and Ethiopian forces. (BBC, March 6; IRIN, March 1; WP, March 6).

Surge of violence precedes peacekeeper deployment: Mortar attacks and heavy clashes left nine dead and several wounded in Mogadishu as the Somali government prepared to receive the first deployment of troops from an African Union mission sent to stabilize the country. Mortars fired March 2 near Mogadishu's port wounded six, and were followed by the March 5 killings of a police commander, a leading cleric, and five others by gunmen, and by March 6 clashes that killed three and wounded one. Meanwhile, pirates continue to hold captive the twelve-member crew of a U.N.-chartered cargo ship hijacked February 25 off the coast of Puntland, and have not issued demands for their release. The recent violence exemplifies the anarchy that has plagued the country since the government's December 26 ouster of the Union of Islamic Courts, and highlights the importance of the A.U. mission's role in helping to restore order. The U.N.-supported mission is expected to replace Ethiopian troops that have been helping government forces fight insurgents since assisting in their ouster of the Courts, but the mission has managed to raise only half of its required 8,000 troops. The government blames the violence on remnants of the Courts, who have vowed to wage an insurgency against the government, and has increased security measures around Mogadishu in order to prevent and respond to near-daily rocket attacks. Civilians have been particularly affected by the violence, which has killed dozens of Mogadishu residents and prompted many to leave the city. Aside from the Courts' six-month period of

rule, Somalia has not had an effective government for sixteen years. ([BBC](#), [WP](#), March 2, March 6, 2007).

## **SRI LANKA**

Three soldiers killed by Tamil Tigers prior to rebel warning of “bloodbath”: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels killed three Sri Lankan soldiers in the northern Jaffna peninsula just hours before issuing an alert March 6. The violent attack was in response to a five-month long military effort to drive many rebels from their bases in eastern Sri Lanka. The killings preceded a warning of bloodshed issued by Tamil rebel political chief S.P. Thamilselvan during a meeting with Norwegian ambassador Hans Brattskar. This had been the strongest warning of violence since a ceasefire was signed in 2002 between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. Thamilselvan made additional statements during the meeting accusing the military of amassing weapons and soldiers that would be used against the Tamils. He also said that the international community’s approach toward the government of Sri Lanka had been too “soft.” Thamilselvan forewarned that the civil war would worsen if external actors did not take a firm stance in halting military activity against the LTTE. International donors responded to the statements by demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to peace talks. Tamil separatists have been fighting the government in a civil war that has resulted in at least 68,000 casualties since 1983. ([AP](#); [Reuters](#), March 5, 2007).

Police and security forces suspected of kidnappings: Policemen, soldiers and underworld figures were arrested March 6 in connection with a series of kidnappings and murders after five corpses were found in northern Sri Lanka. The international community, including human rights groups and foreign donors, has put increasing pressure on the Sri Lankan government to stop human rights abuses and killings on both sides of the conflict. Deputy Inspector General of the police’s foreign intelligence department, Asoka Wijetilleke, commented that further investigations will be held on the possible culpability of soldiers, police officers and organized criminal operations. There has been speculation that the Sri Lankan government and troops have sponsored and participated in past abductions, but the government has adamantly denied any allegations and has promised to issue investigations into the crimes. United Nations envoy Allan Rock has claimed to have credible evidence that parts of the Sri Lankan security forces have assisted the Karuna rebel faction in abducting children and forcing them into combat. Human Rights minister Mahinda Samarasinghe has denied the allegations saying that there is no evidence of a connection between government forces and Karuna activity. Since the start of 2007, Sri Lanka’s Human Rights Commissioner has reported one hundred abductions and disappearances spanning Colombo, eastern parts of Batticaloa, and the Jaffna peninsula, in addition to the one thousand cases reported during 2006. At least 68,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the war in 1983 between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. ([BBC](#); [Reuters](#), March 6, 2007).

## **SUDAN**

Ali Kushayb denies ICC criminal charges: Sudanese official Ali Kushayb, also known as Ali Mohammed Ali Abd-al-Rahman, denied accusations March 4 of his involvement in Janjaweed militia attacks on civilians in western Darfur. Kushayb claimed that rather than attacking the civilians, he was recruited to protect villagers from the militiamen. Kushayb was quoted in the [Al Intibaha](#) daily as saying, “We did not kill any innocent people and we did not cause the displacement of any people.” He also stated that the accusations were false “simply because these acts never happened in the first place.” The International Criminal Court (ICC) has documented evidence charging both Ali Kushayb and Ahmed Mohammed Haroun with fifty-one counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Kushayb denied meeting with Haroun to carry out any of the alleged crimes, including torture, rape and murder. Although Ali Kushayb has denied that any crimes were carried out against civilians, prosecutors in the case have cited atrocities in four different villages in Darfur connecting Kushayb to the crimes. Kushayb, who has been referred to as a colonel of colonels in the Janjaweed by ICC chief

prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, has been accused by one of the survivors of a mass rape in the town of Arawala, and of participating in the summary execution of at least thirty-two men. Ali Kushayb has been in government custody since November 2006 undergoing a separate investigation of five attacks in which hundreds of people were killed. At least 200,000 have been killed and millions more displaced since the violence began in Darfur in 2003. (AP, March 4, 2007).

Envoys press for international presence in Sudan: Former United Nations envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk stated his support for the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s filing of charges against two war criminal suspects and commented that it has produced a new political reality for Sudan. Pronk stated to the Sudan Tribune that the ICC has "created a new political fact, where the Security Council has failed, and it is a great opportunity for the people of Sudan." Pronk also supported the charges against Ahmed Haroun but believed that Haroun did not act alone in the war crimes and crimes against humanity. Although Pronk has anticipated a surge of insecurity for aid operations in Darfur due to the ICC prosecutions, it is his view that the naming of the criminals has been an indispensable step in halting impunity for war crimes. The former envoy also expressed a desire for President Omar al-Bashir to recognize the allegations and act in accordance with international law. Following Pronk's statements, United States envoy Andrew Natsios visited Sudan and met with al-Bashir in hopes of pressuring the president to accept international forces into Darfur. Natsios' trip was to also include a visit to Juba, in southern Sudan, where he was to inspect the situation on the ground in the wake of the war between the North and the South. He was also to visit western Darfur to inspect the situation of genocide. Natsios presented a letter from President George W. Bush urging al-Bashir to accept an African Union and United Nations (U.N.) hybrid force into the country; he was also expected to use a variety of diplomatic levers, such as the prospect of heavier sanctions, in order to reach cooperation. The letter was written in response to a lengthy statement from al-Bashir to Bush arguing that U.S. pressure on Khartoum was unwelcome. Bush's brief reply to al-Bashir reiterated Washington's support of a peacekeeping force to enter Darfur as well as details of "Plan B," which involves potential implementation of general financial sanctions, sanctions targeted at certain individuals and a no-fly zone over Darfur if Khartoum does not comply. After the meeting, Natsios reported that no agreement was reached in allowing U.N. forces into the country. Pronk and Natsios represent international efforts to end the killing in Darfur that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives since 2003. (ST, March 5, 6; WP, March 8, 2007).

## **UGANDA**

New hope for Juba peace talks: A March 3 statement by Sudanese President Hassan Omar al-Bashir welcoming the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to Sudan restored momentum to Uganda's stalled peace talks between the government and the LRA. Al-Bashir's announcement came after he had vowed in January to "get rid of the LRA from Sudan." Joaquim Chissano, former Mozambique president and United Nations envoy for the conflict, clarified that the Sudanese president welcomed the LRA in south Sudan only, and under the condition that they "participate in peace." Traditional leaders from northern Uganda, together with Chissano and Riek Machar, south Sudan's Vice President and chief mediator for the negotiations, met over the weekend in an attempt to come up with a proposal that would restart the talks. Their resolutions included keeping south Sudan as the chief mediator of the talks and inviting countries with experience in negotiation for guidance in consultation with the parties. The eight countries that would participate in the talks remain unidentified. Although the LRA was not immediately available for comment, Machar told delegates he had spoken to LRA leader Joseph Kony over the phone to discuss further steps. Machar added that Kony had requested ceasefire monitors from eight different African Union countries to be appointed to restore LRA confidence in the mediator's neutrality. A cessation of hostilities agreement in August 2006 between the Ugandan government and the LRA expired February 28 and could not be extended due to the LRA's refusal to continue the talks in Juba, claiming LRA forces feared for their safety. (Reuters, March 3, 5, 2007)

Armed forces raid Uganda's High Court: Armed security forces stormed the court on March 1 to seize six opposition supporters who were suspected of treason after being granted bail by a judge. Since the March 1 incident judges and lawyers in Uganda have been on strike and are awaiting a government apology for what they have called an attack on the independence of Uganda's judiciary. Elias Kisawuzi, spokesman for the judiciary, said on March 5, "We are closing business; we are not registering any new cases. Court has been suspended." That same day, Ugandan police fired tear gas at demonstrators supporting the strike. Major General Kale Kayihura said he could not quite understand why the policemen decided to use tear gas and continued that the use of it was "unwarranted." President Yoweri Museveni has defended the military police attacks on the court by saying that the judge had been wrong to grant bail to "terrorists." Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda stated that "the government regrets the incident but it was not intended to disrespect the Court nor defy court orders" and that investigations would ensue. Members of Parliament (MP) dismissed Rugunda's statement saying it was unsatisfactory, and asked the government to apologize. MP Wilfred Nuwagaba said, "The statement should have addressed the problems at hand .... We expect the statement to say that we made an error in 2005 and on March 1, 2007 and these are two fundamental errors [rather] than saying the suspects would escape [otherwise]." In 2005, a group of heavily armed military men surrounded the High Court and forced opposition leader Kizza Besigye, along with others suspected of treason, to return to prison after they had been granted bail by a judge. ([BBC](#), March 6; [Monitor](#), March 7; [Reuters](#), March 5, 2007)

## **NEPAL**

Madhesis strike for autonomy: The Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) has organized an indefinite transport shutdown in large parts of the southern plains of Nepal in order to achieve greater autonomy for the Madhesi people. Since January, the Madhesis—who are culturally and linguistically closer to India than Nepal—have been protesting for inclusion. They have claimed that they have been discriminated against by Nepal's hill-dwelling ruling elite. MPRF Chief Upendra Yadav said March 6 "We are stepping up our protests and extending the strike since the government has failed to respond to our just demands." In addition to autonomy for the plains, the Forum has demanded that a larger portion of jobs and seats in Parliament be given to Madhesis. The strike has led to the deaths of more than 30 people, mostly protestors, and has already affected goods and fuel supplies across Nepal. Last month, the MPRF suspended protests after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala agreed to meet some demands, but Yadav said that the government had failed to create an atmosphere for dialogue which had forced them to resume demonstrations. One of the group's stipulations for restarting talks is the resignation of Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula, who has been accused of using excessive force to quell protests. Adding to the problem, Maoists and Madhesis have been constantly clashing in the region, as Maoists have been losing their grip on the plain areas over which they claim control. Although Madhesis make up almost 50 percent of Nepal's population, they have been historically underrepresented in government due to their ethnic background. Proportional representation in Parliament was one of the demands Koirala conceded the Madhesis, which would have given them 49 percent of the seats. ([BBC](#), March, 6; [IRIN](#), March 1; [Reuters](#), March 6, 2007)

Eight-party unity in danger of breaking apart: Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), said March 6 that if a date for the constituent assembly elections was not announced within a week, the eight-party alliance would break apart. General Secretary Nepal further added that demands from various indigenous groups, together with those made by Maoists regarding the nature of the republic that they would establish, had complicated the situation and aided regressive forces in delaying the constituent assembly elections. A greater push for the constituent assembly elections came after King Gyanendra defended his February 2005 takeover, declaring that he had been compelled to act in order to maintain law and order. Maoist leader Prachanda said the king's statement showed that "reactionary elements [were] still trying to wreak

havoc in the country and that they might still indulge in one final conspiracy to impose autocratic rule.”  
(Kantipur, March 6, 7, 2007)

