



**Peace & Justice Update**  
*March 30, 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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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> )
BICECA	=	Building Informed Civic Engagement for Conservation in the Andes-Amazon ( <a href="http://www.biceca.org">www.biceca.org</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> )
ICTY	=	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ( <a href="http://www.un.org/icty">www.un.org/icty</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**

U.S. military investigates Afghan deaths: On March 24 the United States military began investigating the March 4 shooting deaths of ten civilian Afghans by U.S. Marines. The marines claimed they opened fire after a suicide bomber attacked their convoy in eastern Afghanistan. The 120- member U.S. Marine Corps unit was recalled soon after the investigation began because they were no longer able to operate effectively in the area. According to spokesman Lt. Col. Lou Leto, the March 4 fighting had incited local anger against the troops and prevented them from conducting counterinsurgency operations. The protests came after Afghan officials claimed that the marine unit killed at least ten people outside Jalalabad, a city located near the Pakistan border, although Human Rights Watch puts the death toll at around 16. The U.S. military responded to the outcry by stating that the Marines had fired in self-defense, and blamed the insurgents for planning the suicide bombing in a highly populated area. No Afghan government official has confirmed the military's account of the attack, and several eyewitnesses claimed that the marines opened fire without apparent reason. The four enlisted marines and four marine officers involved in the incident were asked to remain in Afghanistan until Army Major General Francis Kearney III, the commander of Special Operations troops in the Middle East and Central Asia, decides what disciplinary actions should be taken. United States military forces have occupied Afghanistan since 2001, when a U.S. - and British-led operation ousted the Taliban from power. The past year has witnessed a large increase in insurgent attacks, and Taliban spokesmen warned that thousands of their members have been trained for suicide missions against allied troops. Civilian casualties have particularly escalated in the south, where villagers have responded to the Allied Forces' occupation by joining the Taliban's call to arms against foreign troops. One-quarter of the 4,000 people killed in 2006 were civilians. (NYT, March 24; Reuters, March 25, 2007)

Suicide bombings continue to plague Afghanistan: Four people were killed and twelve others injured March 28 when a suicide bomber staged an attack in the streets of Kabul. The bomber was dressed as a beggar and had tried to position himself close to the investigations chief of Afghanistan's intelligence service, Kamulladeen Khan Echekezai, before detonating his bomb. Officials said that no members of the intelligence service were harmed in the explosion. The March 28 attack came a day after a suicide bomber disguised as a member of the Afghan National Army blew himself up in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. The March 27 bomber launched his attack outside a police station, killing four policemen and injuring at least one other. On the same day, suspected Taliban militants attacked Afghan security forces in Khost province, located near the Pakistan border. Six insurgents were reported dead in the clash, according to the province's police chief. The past year has witnessed a large increase in violence as more than 1,000 civilians in Helmand and neighboring provinces have been killed by insurgent attacks, and over 5,000 families have been displaced. The increase in civilian deaths has generated resentment against North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s presence in Afghanistan. The United States and allied troops have been in Afghanistan since ousting the Taliban from power in late 2001. (AP, March 28; WP, March 27, 2007)

### **GUATEMALA**

International council to oversee police archives: An International Consultative Council has been created to oversee the protection of extensive police archives that expose the atrocities committed during Guatemala's 36-year long civil war. The council was to include archive specialists from Argentina, Uruguay and the United States, including Kate Doyle, an analyst at the nongovernmental National Security Archive based in Washington, D.C. The archives are currently unavailable to the public while experts restore and organize the materials. Sergio Morales, Guatemala's Human Rights ombudsman, said that the archives would later be released to the public so that those interested in investigating what happened to their friends or family members during the war could use the archives for research. The documents could also be used to help prosecutors build cases against those involved in atrocities. So

far, 2.1 million documents detailing over 105 years of illicit police activity in Guatemala have been restored, but many have suffered damage from water and time. The documents were accidentally discovered in July 2005 during a search for explosives in an abandoned police warehouse north of Guatemala City. The documents detail how police identified and killed political opponents during Guatemala's 1960-96 civil war. The war killed over 200,000 people, most of whom were indigenous Mayans. (WP, March 21, 2007)

Bishop excluded from international meeting: The Guatemalan government prevented Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini and a group of several indigenous leaders from participating in the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) meeting in Guatemala City March 19, citing security concerns. Officials saw the groups as a threat to infrastructure and extractives projects, and were opposed to their participation in a press conference organized by United States and Guatemalan human rights and environmental groups. Indigenous leaders—which include the leaders of Mayan federations Waqib Kej and National Coordination of Indigenous and Farmers (CONIC) and the leader of the human rights legal group Center for Legal Action against Human Rights (CALDH)—and Ramazzini had hoped to address what they saw as the IDB's failure to promote fair, inclusive and sustainable development in Guatemala. Monsignor Ramazzini, well-known for his humanitarian work and human rights advocacy, criticized the IDB for upholding the Guatemalan government's decision to exclude them from the conference, stating that the decision contradicted the IDB's commitment to social inclusion. He went on to criticize political leaders for lack of awareness of the extent of poverty and marginalization in Guatemala. In 2006, Guatemala was ranked 118<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the United Nations human development index. Income disparity is a pressing issue in Guatemala, with 20 percent of the country receiving two-thirds of the national income. (BICECA, March 19, 2007)

## **KOSOVO**

Kosovo proposal sent to U.N. Security Council, backed by U.S.: After ending year-long negotiations over the status of Kosovo that failed to produce a result, United Nations envoy Martti Ahtisaari referred his proposal for Kosovo independence to the U.N. Security Council for a final decision. Council members were to review Ahtisaari's recommendations, which were drafted February 6 and sent to the Council March 26, and issue a resolution determining Kosovo's final status by late June. The proposal, whose contents had until now officially remained confidential, grants the Serbian province independence with initial European Union oversight, as well as autonomy for its minority Serb population. Previously-leaked excerpts from Ahtisaari's proposal indicated that Kosovo would be allowed to establish its own flag, constitution, national anthem and national army, and to apply for membership in international organizations. While Serbia has rejected the plan, which it considers a violation of its territorial integrity and a threat to the province's 100,000 ethnic Serbs, Kosovar Albanian officials have broadly accepted it as a necessary step toward full independence. The United States also supports the plan and will try to persuade other Security Council members to do so, according to a statement issued by U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns following Ahtisaari's March 26 proposal. Burns rejected Russian opposition to the plan and outlined a timetable for its implementation that allotted five to seven weeks for ethnic Albanian leaders, ethnic Serb leaders and the Security Council to reach an arrangement. British and German officials and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon have also approved the proposal, but Serbian ally Russia remains opposed to it, though it has not threatened a veto in the upcoming Security Council vote. Kosovo is Serbia's oldest province and is largely seen as the cradle of Serb civilization, but has been administered by a provisional U.N. administration since a NATO air campaign ended a 1999 interethnic conflict between Serbs and Albanians. (BBC; WP, March 26, 2007)

War crimes trial for Kosovars' murders reveals details of mass killings: Testimony from March 21 proceedings against two former Serbian commandos has shed new light on atrocities perpetrated against ethnic Albanians during the 1999 Kosovo conflict. Speaking at the trial of defendants Sreten

Popovic and Milos Stojanovic, former police commander Radomir Djeric described the transport of 30 bodies to a police training facility east of Belgrade to be buried in a mass grave disguised as a garbage disposal. Testimony was also provided by former Serb policeman Bozidar Protic, who described making rounds in a truck to transport 120 bodies from various locations in Kosovo to three mass graves in Serbia, including the one under the command of Djeric. The defendants in the March 21 proceedings were charged as accomplices in the murders of Albanian-American brothers Agron, Illy, and Mehmet Bytyqi, who were allegedly bound and blindfolded, then shot and dumped into the mass grave at Djeric's camp. Serbian police arrested Popovic, Stojanovic and two others March 25 in connection with the murders. The Bytyqi brothers had traveled to Kosovo in 1999 to fight Serb counterinsurgency forces, but were abducted near the Serbia-Kosovo border after the cessation of hostilities. The exhumation of their bodies in 2000 led to November 2006 trials of two former policemen and an indictment of a former Serb police chief by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The ICTY is currently trying former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and two accomplices for their roles in the torture and killings of Serbs, Roma, and Albanian collaborators during the 1999 conflict. Thousands were killed and nearly a thousand buried in mass graves during the fighting, which was ended by a 1999 NATO air campaign against Kosovo and Belgrade. The United Nations has since administered Kosovo, but the U.N. Security Council is currently reviewing a February 6 proposal to grant independence to the Serbian province. (WP, March 22, 2007)

## **NEPAL**

Recent upheaval threatens peace process and interim government formation: Analysts have stated that escalating violence and political unrest in the southern Terai region may jeopardize the current peace process. Although a comprehensive peace agreement between Nepal's government and Maoist rebels was signed in November 2006, increasing demands by the ethnically-based Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), have threatened to unravel the agreement. A clash between the MPRF and the Maoist-affiliated Madhesi Mukti Morcha (MMM) March 21 in Gaur, nearly 62 miles southeast of Kathmandu, killed 27 and injured others. Over the past three months, the MPRF has organized a series of political demonstrations, strikes and blockades to lobby for greater regional autonomy, proportional political representation in the government and greater political rights for the historically-repressed Madhesi the group claims to represent. Conflict analyst Bishnu Pathak said after the Gaur violence, "If such incidents recur, then Nepal will face a huge human-made disaster." Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said March 22 that although Nepal had experienced recent "unruliness," he would continue to guide the peace process to a satisfactory conclusion. The prime minister's statement came in response to a four-day visit by a European Union Parliamentary team for South Asian Affairs that arrived in Nepal March 21. The team members expressed their concerns regarding the escalating violence in the Terai, a narrow strip of land on the border with India that is home to nearly half of the country's population. Speaking March 21 at the United States House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also expressed her concern with the peace process, calling the situation in Nepal "tenuous." Additionally, Baburam Bhattarai, widely considered second in command behind Maoist chief Prachanda, has said that because the government has failed to fairly distribute ministerial portfolios to the Maoists, the constituent assembly elections, scheduled for mid-June, are less likely to take place on time. "If that happens then that [would] be against the spirit of the peace deal, [and] the peace process could be stalled, could be jeopardized," continued Bhattarai. In November 2006, Maoist rebels and the seven-party coalition government signed a peace agreement to end a decade-long armed conflict that claimed more than 14,000 lives and internally displaced more than 200,000 Nepalese civilians. (IRIN, March 28; Kantipur, March 21, 22, 26; Reuters, March 28, 2007)

Maoists say MPRF must be outlawed: In response to a deadly March 21 clash between the Maoist-aligned Madhesi Mukti Morcha (MMM) and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), Maoist

chairman Prachanda urged the government to ban the MPRF, label it a terrorist organization and initiate action against its leadership. Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai stated: "If the government wants us to stop from retaliation, it should arrest the killers, declare the deceased martyrs and pay compensation to their families. ... We will start a war against the MPRF if the government fails to meet our demands." In response to Bhattarai's statement, Upendra Yadav, leader of the MPRF, said "We had not expected such a remark from a party that has joined a democratic parliament," adding that the government and the Maoists should bear responsibility for the rising violence in the country. The United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN), established in January to support the ongoing peace process, stated that it was concerned over the lack of security in many parts of the country. UNMIN spokesman Kieran Dwyer said, "The killing also [underlined] the urgent need for the MPRF, the MMM and all political groups to clearly and definitely renounce violence in advancing their political causes. ... The use of violence [would] only make truly inclusive national dialogue more difficult." The deaths of 58 people in Madhesi protests this year have overshadowed the government's peace deal with the Maoists. (IRIN, March 28; Kantipur, March 22; Reuters, March 22, 23, 2007)

## **SOMALIA**

Security talks reach standstill: Stalled negotiations between Ethiopian military officials and leaders of the dominant Hawiye clan threatened a March 24 truce that has suppressed the recent surge of violence in Mogadishu. The two-day truce ended one of the bloodiest weeks in the capital since the December 26 ouster of the Union of Islamic Courts, as rocket attacks and gun battles killed twenty soldiers and civilians. But the failure of Ethiopian military officials and leaders of the Hawiye, some of whom supported the Courts during their six-month rule, to reach an agreement may precipitate an unraveling of the shaky ceasefire and a resumption of the violence. Hawiye leaders have demanded to speak directly to President Abdullahi Yusuf and other members of the government, while Ethiopian military officials have insisted on disarming Mogadishu residents and establishing strongholds in the city before holding any political talks. Neither side has altered its respective position since the beginning of the talks, and Hawiye spokesman Abdi Iman Omer predicted that the impasse may lead to more violence and displacements. Since the Courts' overthrow, dozens of Mogadishu residents have been killed by near-daily battles between government forces and insurgents, who are thought to be remnants of the Courts' military wing; thousands have fled the city. Prior to the Courts' rule, Somalia had lacked an effective government since 1991, when warlords deposed President Mohamed Siad Barre. (WP, March 26, 2007)

Over 100 emigrants reported dead or missing after smuggler attack: Smugglers transporting Somali and Ethiopian refugees to Yemen forced over 450 of the transports overboard, killing at least 31 and sending another 90 missing. The refugees, who were attempting to flee the ongoing violence in Somalia, were traveling on a smuggler-operated boat across the Gulf of Aden, which divides the Horn of Africa from the Arabian Peninsula, but were thrown into the sea as the boat approached the Yemen shore. Attempting to evade Yemeni security forces, the smugglers beat, stabbed, and mutilated those who resisted before throwing them into the stormy waters, where many drowned or were attacked by sharks. The March 25 incident brings the total number killed while crossing the Gulf to 262, and underscores the lawlessness and that has plagued Somalia, and particularly Mogadishu, since the December 26 ouster of the Union of Islamic Courts. The government, which lacks effective control over both Somalia's mainland and its territorial waters, has been powerless to stop the refugee boat crossings and was also unable to prevent the February 25 hijacking of a U.N. cargo ship by pirates. Condemning the latest attacks, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees warned March 26 that deteriorating health and safety conditions in Somalia will exacerbate the refugee outflow, especially to Yemen, which is one of the few countries willing to take the refugees. Over 400,000 Somalis have left the country over the past year, according to reports by U.N. humanitarian agencies. The Courts imposed Shar'ia law on the country during their six-month rule, and are blamed for the near-daily attacks in the capital that have killed dozens of soldiers and civilians. (IRIN, WP, March 25, 27, 2007)

Deadliest week of violence kills at 31 dead as insurgent leader is identified: Three successive days of fighting in Mogadishu left 31 dead and dozens wounded, and have been attributed to insurgents led by an alleged al-Qaeda member. A March 21 battle between Ethiopian and Somali troops and insurgents resulted in the deaths of 16 civilians and soldiers and the wounding of dozens more, and four more were killed the next day when Ethiopian tanks opened fire on unidentified attackers. The March 21 deaths prompted civilians and insurgents to burn, mutilate, and drag the bodies of four Ethiopian and Somali soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu in a scene reminiscent of a 1993 incident in which the bodies of 18 American soldiers were similarly dragged through the capital city. This latest incident, like the one in 1993, came amid the deployment of an intervention mission to support the fledgling government in restoring stability to the country. Over 1,200 Ugandan troops have arrived in Somalia as part of the African Union mission, and an additional 4,000 have been pledged by Burundi, Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria. Insurgents have pledged to fight against the intervention force, and are now being led by the rebel commander Aden Hashi Ayro, according to a March 22 statement by Deputy Defense Minister Salad Ali Jelle. Ayro, who was trained in Afghanistan and has been accused by both the Somali and United States governments of connections to al-Qaeda, is leader of the Islamists' Shabab wing that is thought to be running the insurgency. Following the March 21-22 street fighting, insurgents shot down a cargo plane affiliated with the A.U. mission as it was departing from Mogadishu airport, killing all eleven Belarusian crew members. The March 23 airplane downing immediately followed the calling of a two-day truce by Ethiopian military officials and leaders of the dominant Hawiye clan that ended the recent streak of violence in the city. Somalia has lacked effective government since 1991, when warlords overthrew President Mohamed Siad Barre, but enjoyed a period of stability under the six-month rule of the Union of Islamic Courts. Since the Courts' December 26 ouster by government and Ethiopian forces, insurgents have waged near-daily attacks that have killed and wounded dozens of civilians. (BBC, March 22, 23; WP, March 22, 24, 25, 2007)

## **SRI LANKA**

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launch air raid attack on military base near capital: Just past midnight March 26 Tamil rebels launched an unprecedented aerial attack when they bombed the Katunayake military base adjacent to the international airport in Colombo. The air raid killed three air force personnel and injured sixteen after bombs hit a plane and helicopter parking area at the base. The attacks did not damage the international airport nor did they kill any civilians. The military base suffered minor damage and no planes were hit. The LTTE claimed responsibility for the attack, releasing photos of planes and personnel that participated in the raid via the pro-rebel website, Tamilnet. The government reported that one plane was used in the attack, whereas rebels claimed that two aircraft were used to execute the raid and then safely flown back to rebel-held territory. Questions arose over how the Tigers had acquired the planes as well as how the planes flew for more than 125 miles without being detected. Government minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle commented that "no terrorist group in this part of the world has any air capability." Later on March 26 Tamils reported that government planes retaliated by carrying out four raids on civilian areas in the north of the island, although there were no casualties. The incident is the latest in a conflict that has burdened the country for the past twenty-four years. (BBC, March 26, 2007).

Member of LTTE kills himself and seven others in suicide attack on Sri Lankan army: A suicide bomber from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) arrived in a tractor armed with explosives at a camp in Batticaloa March 27. His attempt at blowing up the camp was thwarted when military troops shot at the attacker upon his entrance to the camp, causing the tractor to explode and killing him. Of those killed, three of them were civilians belonging to the pro-government Tamil party, the Eelam People's Democratic Party, whose office is located in the vicinity. A twelve-year old boy was also killed in the blast. The explosion happened early on the morning of March 27, one day after an LTTE air raid on a military base and subsequent government raids in the north of the island. Tensions

have been mounting since the breakdown of a ceasefire between the government and Tamil rebels who have been fighting for a separate Tamil state for over two decades. ([BBC](#), March 27, 2007).

## **SUDAN**

U.N. humanitarian efforts continue to face resistance from Sudanese president: The U.N.'s new humanitarian chief, John Holmes, who has been on a tour of Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, has reported on the impact of government blockades in the Darfur region of Sudan. The Sudanese military initially barred Holmes himself from a military camp March 25, but then admitted him and apologized. Many of the internally displaced people in the camps have stated that they are cut off from humanitarian relief. One woman in the camp claimed a sense of insecurity due to government blocking of roads and her fear of additional attacks. Blockades have limited the access of aid agencies that have been attempting to bring medical help, food and water to camps. Rebel groups as well as government-backed militias like the Janjaweed have contributed to these insecurities and have warned that conditions in the camps are so dangerous and morale so low that it would only take one more major incident to generate a humanitarian collapse. Holmes was expected to meet with Sudanese ministers March 26 to discuss these issues further. Additionally, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was expected to meet with U.N. chief Ban Ki-Moon in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 27 to discuss the Darfur conflict. Joining the meeting, hosted by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, would be Arab League chief Amr Mussa, and former president of Mali and current Chairman of the African Commission Alpha Oumar Konaré. Al-Bashir has reiterated his refusal to have the current state humanitarian affairs minister Ahmed Haroun brought before the International Criminal Court after the Court named Haroun in connection with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Lack of access for aid workers is the latest setback in the war-torn region of Darfur. ([BBC](#) March 25; [ST](#) March 26, 2007).

Amnesty International protests stoning of women charged with adultery: Two women from the Darfur region of Sudan, Sadia Idriss Fadul and Amouna Abdallah Daldoum, were sentenced to death by stoning by a court in Gezira State in central Sudan for committing adultery. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International have been protesting the sentencing and calling into question Sudan's penal code. The country's legal system is based partly on Shari'a law, which allows the death penalty in cases of adultery, murder or apostasy. Amnesty International has argued that this system of law is unfairly applied because not all citizens of Sudan are Muslim. In addition, the trial was conducted in Arabic which was not the native language of either woman—Fadul and Daldoum did not understand what was being said at their own trials. President of the Sudanese Bar Association Fathi Khaleel interjected that there was a low probability that the women would actually be put to death due to the four appeal processes that must be completed before an execution can take place. Khaleel also asserted that the law clearly stated that stoning would not be a legal form of punishment; furthermore, he argued that Amnesty International's protests were merely an attempt to politicize the event. So far, the women have not filed appeals, and any death sentence that would be carried out would still require President al-Bashir's approval. The case is only a microcosm of the legal and religious conflicts that partially instigated the 22-year civil war between the North and South that ended in 2005. ([VOA](#), March 22, 2007).

## **UGANDA**

Date set for resuming peace talks: The next round of discussions between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government was expected to take place April 13. Former Mozambique President and United Nations envoy to the talks, Joaquim Chissano said March 22 that the talks would be a preliminary discussion about resuming the stalled peace negotiations that had been taking place in the southern Sudanese capital, Juba. The decision came after a delegation headed by Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda met with Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in Khartoum, where al-Bashir expressed concern over the open-ended nature of the peace process. "President al-Bashir has reiterated his support for the peace talks in Juba but he has observed that the talks should not be open-

ended. There must be a timeframe,” said Rugunda during a March 22 press conference in Kampala. Meanwhile, Chissano planned to return to the Congo-Sudan border to meet LRA leaders to work out a resolution to resume the peace process. The LRA, whose leaders are under indictment by the International Criminal Court, demanded that a statement by the Sudanese authorities regarding al-Bashir’s vow to “get rid of the LRA from Sudan” in January be retracted before resuming peace talks. Additionally the LRA asked for a “complete overhaul” of the peace talks secretariat in Juba and for increased allowances for LRA delegates to the talks. When asked if the indictments were an obstacle, Chissano said the only difficulty the five warrants posed were that those indicted, including to LRA leader Joseph Kony, would not participate in the Juba talks. Ugandan negotiators had earlier met Kony at his bush hideout March 11 in an attempt to restart the stalled Juba talks. ([IRIN](#), March 23; [Monitor](#), March 24; [Reuters](#), March 22, 23, 2007)

Recent upheaval threatens interim government formation: Reports that the government was seeking parliament’s approval for a new forest plan that would clear 17,500 acres of the Mabira Forest Reserve, east of Kampala, have brought about massive protests. The campaign against the forest plan started March 20, following media reports that the government had endorsed the forest lease to the Lugazi-based Scoul Sugar, east of Kampala. So far, several Ugandan Members of Parliament have criticized the plan, tagging it a matter of national concern. “The giveaway is a threat to the biodiversity of the forest and cannot be brushed aside,” said MP Sebuliba Mutumba. Prior to the creation of a protest website, 15,000 cellular telephone short messages (SMS) were sent asking receivers to boycott Scoul Sugar. Police spokesman Assan Kasingye said, “We are going to crack down on the originators of these SMS because this is not only a boycott but also economic sabotage which is illegal in the country.” Tamale Mirundi, a government spokesman, also criticized the protests, “This is the proper way of utilizing resources. . . . It is easier to relocate the forest by planting trees elsewhere than to relocate a factory.” According to nongovernmental group BirdLife International, Mabira Forest Reserve is the largest block of moist semi-deciduous forest remaining in the central region of Uganda. ([BBC](#); [IRIN](#), March 27; [Monitor](#), March 27, 28, 2007)

