

WCI Headlines

April 2008

Ethiopia

Summary Analysis:

This month showed a multitude of problems in the economic and political status of Ethiopia. Recent rises in food prices, coupled with Ethiopia's year-long drought have led to a dire food crisis in Ethiopia and many other African nations. This month, Ethiopia unveiled a commodities market to help combat the growing food crisis. Border conflict with neighboring Eritrea continues, as does Ethiopian presence in Somalia. Recently, the Ethiopian army was accused of killing innocent civilians in the conflict with Somalia, specifically in a mosque massacre in which Somali victims were found with slit throats.

Focus Areas:

Conflict

- Ethiopian army not included in Somalia's peace talks
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804170007.html>
- UN trying to get Ethiopia and Eritrea to commit to peacekeeping
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804230007.html>

Political

- Ethiopia in need of elections governance
 - http://www.bdafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7223&Itemid=5821
- Elections results for National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) – overwhelming win by EPRDF
 - <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/59606>
 -
- Ethiopian soldiers confiscate weapons of ex-Prime Minister Gedi, who was rumored to be leading an uprising against Somali President Yusuf
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804180902.html>

Economy

- Ethiopia launches a commodities exchange to boost fair trade and stabilize its food market
 - http://nazret.com/blog/index.php?title=ethiopia_launches_commodities_exchange&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1
- Rising oil and food prices could be detrimental to Africa's development
 - <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2008-04-28-voa38.cfm>

Social/Cultural

- Women gather to celebrate cultural diversity
 - <http://ballarat.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news-features/women-unite-to-share-experiences/1231936.html>
- Ethiopia seeks \$68 million to aid 2.2 million draught victims after a year of inadequate rainfall
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804111135.html>

Liberia

Summary Analysis:

A number of key issues plaguing Liberia received international attention in April. The world food crisis led the Government of Liberia (GOL) to give incentives and promoted conversion of land for increased rice production. The UNMIL released a report on humanitarian conditions in Liberia; while its “blue helmet” UN peacekeeping troops position themselves for a ‘cautious and gradual’ pull out of the country. The UN reports describes how women and particularly young girls are still suffering from gender-based violence abound. With this and similar report, there has also been increased Liberian and international support for the Stop Rape Campaign, which moved into Northern Liberia this month, as well as discussion in the legislature of making Rape a capital offence. The TRC continues its work, despite reports from pressure from some in GOL and conflict amongst commissioners. Liberian youth have peacefully mobilized on a number of political and social issues. A large Liberian Women Leader’s Conference, set to take place from May 5th-9th in Monrovia, will be important to track.

Focus Areas:

Post-Conflict Situation, Transformation

- All-Female Indian Unit in Liberia Shows How to Keep the Peace
 - <http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-04-02-voa23.cfm>
- New UNMIL Report highlights various rights violations and offers some recommendations
 - <http://www.unmil.org/article.asp?id=2713>
- Liberia: UNMIL Accuses Court Officials of Corruption

- <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804030792.html>
- Liberia: Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI) Completes Training for Several Schools
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804040402.html>
- Liberians Soon May Be Getting More Mail, with U.S. Help
 - <http://newsblaze.com/story/20080408094305tsop.nb/newsblaze/WORLDNEW/World-News.html>
- Liberia place of hope after four years free of conflict, but security situation remains fragile, Security Council told
 - <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-7DPP35?OpenDocument>
- UN's Ban to visit Liberia as blue helmets prepare pullout
 - <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iUbNU6dFiMDijuXXterfYQnDtexQ>

Women's Issues

- Liberia: Rape Has Two-Fold Consequences (and is still prevalent)
 - "This crime has serious social and economic consequences for the society," the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Rule of Law in Liberia told about a thousand people attending the launch.
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804021069.html>
- Liberia: UN (Deputy UN envoy for Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu) Puts Witchcraft Center Stage
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804030795.html>
- University of Liberia Agriculture Women Cooperative (ULAWC) Holds Agriculture Harvest Day
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804040400.html>
- UN-backed anti-rape campaign reaches northern Liberia
 - <http://www.afriquenligne.fr/news/africa-news/un%11backed-anti%11rape-campaign-reaches-northern-liberia-200804182066.html>
- Liberia: Campaign Against GBV, Small Arms Intensifies
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804161147.html>
- Liberia may make armed robbery, rape capital offences
 - <http://www.afriquenligne.fr/news/africa-news/liberia-may-make-armed-robbery,-rape-capital-offences-200804302699.html>
- Big National Women's Conference Slated for Monday, MAY 5TH
 - http://www.liberianobserver.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/11529/Big_National_Women's_Conference_Slated_for_Monday.html

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

- Liberia: Chilling Testimonies in Lofa, Grand Bassa Counties

- <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804180529.html>
- Liberia's Truth Commission Under Siege
 - <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2008-04-11-voa4.cfm>
- Liberian Truth and Reconciliation from Afar
 - http://www.diplomaticourier.org/web_features/web_feature_175_Liberian_TRC_Diaspora.html
- Ellen Not Sure of TRC's Powers

Media Issues

- The Management of The Liberian Journal (<http://www.theliberianjournal.com/>) says there is a huge need to highlight events and developments in the Liberian Diaspora.”
 - <http://runningafrica.com/news-04052008Liberian-Journal.html>
- Liberia: Lawmakers Assure Passage of Media Laws
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804180724.html>

International Relations and Other Important Headlines

- Liberia: President Sirleaf Welcomes Britain's 4 Million Dollars Support to Health Sector
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804110532.html>
- Liberia to plant more rice as import costs soar
 - <http://africa.reuters.com/business/news/usnBAN652833.html>
- Liberia: GOL, ADA Sign Agreement to Increase Rice Production
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804090612.html>
- China pledges to fund food production in Africa, Liberia
 - http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-04/23/content_8036091.htm
- Liberia: Yellow Fever Outbreak in Nimba County Confirmed
 - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804211440.html>

Sri Lanka

Summary Analysis:

Fighting between the Tamil minority insurgents and the Sinhalese majority government, a source of conflict in the country since 1983, continues. The security situation in northern Sri Lanka is particularly fraught. There were two major bombings this month in Sri Lanka, one

April 6 at the start of a marathon and another at the end of the month on a bus. The former killed a former Olympian and a government minister, as well as 12 others. The latter killed 24 people. Rebels and military soldiers clashed in northern Sri Lanka, leaving dozens dead. The rebels also launched their first air strike in over a year.

A French aid group left the country due to frustrations over the government's unsatisfactory investigation of a massacre of seventeen of its workers two years ago. The government is facing numerous international criticisms that it isn't investigating human rights abuses or ensuring human rights protections. Finally, President Ahmadinejad of Iran is visiting Sri Lanka to discuss economic and cooperation agreements with the SL government. Sri Lanka is turning away from the West and its criticism of SL human rights and the ongoing ethnic war, and instead turning toward Asian and Middle Eastern allies like Iran. Iran has pledged \$1.9 billion to SL to expand its oil refinery, develop an irrigation and hydropower project and buy Iranian oil. China has also pledged funds for development projects in SL.

Conflict

- Government minister and others killed in blast (April 6)
 - <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940CE7DB143FF935A35757C0A96E9C8B63&scp=7&sq=sri+lanka&st=nyt>
 - <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/04/06/news/lanka.php>
- Bomb on bus in Sri Lanka (April 25)
 - <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/26/world/asia/26lanka.html>
- 90 killed in fierce fighting
 - <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/24/world/asia/24lanka.html?scp=5&sq=sri+lanka&st=nyt>
- Rebels launch air strike
 - <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/04/27/news/Sri-Lanka-Civil-War.php>

Human rights

- Aid group leaves country over unsolved massacre of its workers
 - <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/04/21/news/Sri-Lanka-Massacre.php>
 - <http://www.iht.com/articles/reuters/2008/04/01/asia/OUKWD-UK-SRILANKA-TSUNAMI-MASSACRE.php>

- SL government and human rights abuse
 - <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/04/15/asia/AS-GEN-Sri-Lanka-Civil-War.php>
- Canada urges imposition of sanctions on SL
 - http://www.nationalpost.com/todays_paper/story.html?id=456015

Economy

- Tariffs and clothing exports in SL
 - http://www.economist.com/daily/columns/asiaview/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10950252&fsrc=nwl
- SL trade deficit grows
 - <http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2008/4/27076.html>

Iranian president visits SL

- <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/world/AP-Sri-Lanka-Iran.html?scp=2&sq=sri+lanka&st=nyt>

Colombia

Summary Analysis:

This month in Colombia showed key developments on national affairs, international relations, and economic indicators for the country's growth. Internal conflict between the Colombian armed forces and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the rebel group, continue to be prevalent. Rising criticism has also developed for Colombian armed forces because of their questionable attacks on civilians suspected of associations with FARC without substantial evidence. Recent news present the controversy of unnecessary peasant killings by Colombia's armed forces. Colombia's legal system plans to take action on these massacres.

The Colombian government continues to face tensions with Ecuador and Venezuela and hopes to renew its diplomatic relations in the near future. In light of these diplomatic complications, Colombia and fellow countries hope to create the South American Defense Council, a NATO-like organization. The Colombian Free Trade Agreement continues to be argued in Congress as President George Bush, Jr. pushes for its approval.

Focus Areas:

Conflict

- Colombia arrests fifteen soldiers for peasant killings.
 - <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN29341843>
- Paramilitary claims Colombia President Uribe and brother's illegal ties to guerrilla fighters.
 - http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top_News/2008/04/27/colombia_paramilitary_claims_tie_to_uribe/4809/
- US President George Bush continues to push for passage of US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.
 - <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/04/29/politics/politico/thecrypt/main4054948.shtml>

International Relations

- South America to arrange the South American Defense Council, in light of deepening tension of Colombia's military intrusion in Ecuador.
 - [http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B92B2B998-8414-4E40-8CCC-F5C4632CD22F%7D\)&language=EN](http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B92B2B998-8414-4E40-8CCC-F5C4632CD22F%7D)&language=EN)
- France restarts its bid to free Colombia FARC hostages, especially Ingrid Betancourt.
 - <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSN2818139820080429>
- Brazil's defense minister vehemently opposes FARC rebels and their invasion into Brazilian territory.
 - <http://www.pr-inside.com/brazil-s-defense-minister-says-his-nation-r561604.htm>

Economy

- Ecopetrol SA, Colombia's state energy company, has discovered oil and gas and thus has increased trade and profits.

- o http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601086&sid=aLpzIyqjTqWw&refer=latin_america
- Colombian Peso gains amidst speculation of central bank's tightening capital control measures.
 - o <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601086&sid=aG2zsNWMx8jg&refer=news>
- Colombia Promigas, second largest natural gas transporter, plans to invest \$214.6 million in 2008 operations in key Latin American countries.
 - o <http://www.reuters.com/article/LatinAmericanInvestment08/idUSN3144321120080401>

Social/Cultural

- Status of children and their development in Colombia.
 - o <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42168>
- Women's group, International Potluck Ladies Group, holds celebration of cultures.
 - o http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=215755&version=1&template_id=36&parent_id=16