



DO NOT STAND IDLY BY

**Human Rights in Crises:
A Summary for Jewish World Watch
September 24, 2007**

The purpose of this report is provide a quarterly update for Jewish World Watch of the most serious human rights crises in the world at this time. This supplements the report of June, 2007. *New material appears in italics.* These descriptions are taken primarily from Enough, Human Rights Watch (www.humanrightswatch.org), the New York Times and The Economist. This report does not describe the situation in Sudan/Darfur/Chad since other JWW reports deal with that crisis. This report makes no attempt to rank the following crises in order of seriousness. Instead, they are listed in alphabetical order.

Included in this report for the first time are maps, copied from Wikipedia, locating the countries in crisis. These maps have been added on the theory that, to understand what is happening, it helps to know where it is happening. To orient you to some of the maps that follow, it might help to refer to the following map, which locates Darfur, Sudan, and Chad.



Burma (Myanmar)



The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Burma's authoritarian military government, remains of major international concern given its intensely restrictive police state that denies most basic rights and freedoms. Continued military action against separatist ethnic rebellions have displaced hundreds of thousands of people, mostly ethnic minorities, while nearly 2 million more have taken refuge in neighboring countries such as Thailand. In January 2007, China and Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution, drafted by the US, urging Burma to stop the persecution of minority and opposition groups. In April of 2007, Burma restored diplomatic ties with North Korea. Human Rights Watch reported an April 2007 attack on civilian members of human rights organizations by "a group of approximately 100 men carrying clubs and other homemade weapons." In May 2007, the Burmese government extended the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairman Than Shwe's main political rival, for another year. *This August authorities raised fuel prices by as much as 500 percent, leading to street protests. Last week Myanmar's military junta admitted on state controlled TV and newspapers that it used tear gas and fired warning shots to disperse a crowd of 1,000 Buddhist monks and civilians protesting in the northwestern coastal city of Sittwe. The admission was a thinly veiled warning to the former Burma's 53 million people after a month of protests against decades of military rule and soaring fuel and food prices.*

Central African Republic



Government troops have carried out hundreds of unlawful killings and burned thousands of civilian homes since mid-2005 in their counterinsurgency campaign in northern Central African Republic (CAR), a new report by Human Rights Watch charged. Since the beginning of the conflict in mid-2005, the CAR security forces have been responsible for the most serious violations in the conflict, including multiple summary executions and unlawful killings, widespread burning of civilian homes, and the forced

displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Security forces often killed dozens of civilians in a single day, and some of the killings involved unspeakable brutality. CAR army forces have also attacked and burned down hundreds of civilian villages in northern CAR, destroying an estimated 10,000 homes and creating a far-ranging humanitarian disaster. In one small area affected by the village burnings – the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago-Kaga Bandoro area – Human Rights Watch researchers counted a total of 2,923 burned homes, including more than 1,000 in the large market town of Ouandago alone. Similar destruction can be found throughout northwestern CAR, an area of hundreds of square kilometers. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 102,000 civilians have been driven from their homes by attacks against their villages in the counterinsurgency. Human Rights Watch said that not a single soldier or officer has been held accountable for the atrocities in CAR.

Democratic Republic of Congo



The eastern region of the DRC has regressed into some of the worst violence in years. In January the government agreed on a deal with the dissident commander Laurent Nkunda to bring an end to fighting since 2004. After a brief reprieve these troops attacked the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Rwandan militia with elements that committed atrocities in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Over a 100,000 people have been displaced and dozens killed. Nkunda's troops are members of the Tutsi community and the FDLR are by the Hutu. This has led to its own tensions. ENOUGH reports that the root cause of most of the violence is due to the weak state institutions that tax and abuse the local population but provide no security or social services in return. No human rights offenders have been put on trial and no solutions have been reached to increasing violence in the eastern region. Rape is rampant and used as a weapon. FDLR rebels continue to attack the local populations. The Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels remain safe in Congo's Garamba National Park. *In late June Nicholas D Kristof said the death toll in this "forgotten war" inside Congo has reached four million, and caused vast and potentially rich land to sink into hunger and poverty. He added that after years of warfare much of country is enjoying real progress, but not in eastern Congo, where war is ratcheting up again; he described the plight of children starving to death and women being raped and men being murdered. Just last week the U.N reported that a warlord in eastern Congo is recruiting child soldiers in violation of international law.*

Ethiopia



The United Nations released a report on September 19 that painted a bleak picture of Ethiopia's war-torn Ogaden region, detailing an acute medicine shortage, depleted food stocks, rising prices and an increased number of beatings and shootings. After a weeklong fact-finding mission to the area, United Nations officials said there was not yet a full-blown crisis, but there could be soon. The report confirms what aid workers and Ogaden residents have been saying for months: that the Ethiopian military has largely sealed off parts of the area in an effort to stamp out a rebel movement and that civilians were suffering. The Ogaden is a desolate corner of eastern Ethiopia where nomads are waging a separatist war against the Ethiopian military. After the rebels killed more than 60 Ethiopian guards and Chinese workers in April, government troops blockaded much of the area, according to Western diplomats and aid workers. Many Ogaden residents have described longstanding abuses, with Ethiopian soldiers gang-raping women, burning huts and killing civilians, accusations the Ethiopian government denies.

Iran



The government of Iran uses claims of foreign threats to justify both the denial of human rights and the development of what many believe to be a nuclear weapons program. The government routinely tortures and mistreats detained dissidents, including through prolonged solitary confinement. The Judiciary, which is accountable to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, is responsible for many serious human rights violations. Iranian authorities systematically suppress freedom of expression and opinion by closing newspapers and imprisoning journalists and editors. *The government recently has considerably increased its harassment and intimidation of women's rights activists. Recent months have seen the largest crackdown on civil liberties since the 1980s. Purges of suspected liberals have decimated university faculties, and repeated closures have all but silenced the once-vociferous opposition press. Four Iranian-American scholars were*

incarcerated earlier this year for alleged ties to American intelligence. Since the spring a wave of arrests has targeted everyone from women's-rights advocates to student leaders, trade unionists and critical journalists, packing the country's prisons so tight that police are commandeering other buildings as makeshift lock-ups. Political activists are not the only ones at risk. Security officials boast that their campaign against "bad hijab", which includes the warning, booking or detaining of women deemed insufficiently clad, but extends also to youths sporting "Western-style" haircuts, rock-music fans, shopkeepers selling indecent garments, and unmarried couples, has alone netted more than 500,000 offenders since April. Signs have appeared outside public hospitals declaring that only women wearing the head-to-floor chador, and not merely the headscarf, will be helped. Much of the police action has been accompanied by complaints of brutality, and in many cases by documentary evidence such as graphic footage of beatings, posted on dissident websites. Despite prison crowding, punitive use of solitary confinement appears to have grown more common. The number of executions nearly doubled last year, to 177, bringing Iran the distinction of being the world's heaviest user of capital punishment per head of population. This year has seen not only a further jump in the number of judicial killings but a return of mass public hangings, which are sometimes broadcast on state television.

Kosovo



Kosovar Albanians and Serbia have struggled to reach agreement on the future status of Kosovo, despite frequent negotiations and consistent diplomatic efforts by regional and international players. Ethnic Albanians make up more than 90% of the 1.8m population, while ethnic Serbs comprise the last 10%. A UN plan, currently under discussion, would give the territory a form of internationally supervised independence. Kosovo would be able to join the UN, have its own flag and its national anthem. The newly independent Kosovo would be prevented from merging with Albania, and Serbian pockets would be prevented from splitting off and joining Serbia. Despite built-in measures protecting the Serbian minority population, Serbia has widely rejected this proposal, and violence has flared since the plan was unveiled. *In August, the U.N. Security Council was unable to reach agreement on a resolution putting Kosovo on the path to independence. Russia objected to the proposal. On September 4, a senior Serbian official warned Serbia is*

ready to use force to prevent Western states from recognizing Kosovo as an independent state. There is grave concern for renewed full-scale violence if a compromise agreement is not reached.

Nepal



A brutal civil war has been fought in Nepal for several years between rebels of the Communist Party of Nepal and government security forces. The rural population of this, one of the poorest countries in Asia, has suffered terribly. Both sides in the civil war have engaged in serious violations of international humanitarian law. In November, 2006, Nepal's coalition government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) signed a comprehensive peace agreement to end the fighting, rewrite the country's constitution (including whether it will remain a monarchy), and establish an interim government. The Nepali Army and Maoists have agreed to an arms management pact, under which each side would put away most of its weapons and restrict most troops to a few barracks, under the supervision of monitors from the United Nations. *This fragile peace agreement was shaken in mid-September when Maoists left the interim coalition government, saying no progress was being made on their key demand of abolishing the monarchy and declaring a republic. The Maoists, who had agreed to a cease-fire last year, warned of widespread protests and a nationwide strike to begin on Oct. 4.*

Pakistan



In office since a 1999 coup d'etat, President Pervez Musharraf's military-backed government has had a poor human rights record. Ongoing concerns include arbitrary detention, lack of due process, and the mistreatment, torture, and "disappearance" of terrorism suspects and political opponents; harassment and intimidation of the media; and legal discrimination against and mistreatment of women and religious minorities. President Musharraf has announced his intention to run for reelection and recently indicated he is willing to resign as army chief. General Musharraf holds the two jobs at

present thanks to a constitutional amendment passed in 2003 with the help of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties. The MMA has now turned against General Musharraf for supporting the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda at America's behest. General Musharraf's original plan was to neuter the Supreme Court by sacking its chief justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry, last March. Three months of pro-Chaudhry protests succeeded in persuading other judges to reinstate their chief in June. Thwarted, General Musharraf began seriously to flirt with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister who is currently in exile. He hoped to win her support for a constitutional amendment enabling his election as president while still in uniform. In the end General Musharraf yielded to pressure from the ruling Muslim League (Q) party, which sees the PPP as its nemesis, to abandon the deal with Miss Bhutto. She has said she will return from exile regardless on October 18th. But she has also said that her party would resign from parliament if General Musharraf tried to have himself elected in uniform. On September 19th one of the general's confidants threatened "extreme decisions"—meaning, presumably, martial law—if the opposition does walk out.

Somalia



Since the overthrow of Siad Barre's 21-year government in January 1991, civil conflict has torn Somalia apart, leading to the collapse of the state and the economy. According to the International Crisis Group, the UN's chief humanitarian officer, John Holmes, called Somali humanitarian and refugee crisis worst in world. Up to 400,000 have been displaced by fighting between ousted Islamists and clan militias against Ethiopian troops and Transitional Federal Government forces. Human Rights Watch states that abuses have been being perpetrated by all sides in this complex conflict: Ethiopian forces, Ethiopia's Somali allies in the transitional federal government (TFG), and those resisting the Ethiopian intervention, including militias loyal to the Hawiye clan and groups aligned to the ICU. But it is the Ethiopians with their superior weapons who are doing much of the harm in Mogadishu. A National Reconciliation Congress began in Mogadishu in June. *The six-week conference, intended to settle longstanding disputes among clans, ended in August. It produced upbeat resolutions but had no visible impact on a raging insurgency in Mogadishu.*

Zimbabwe



In the elections of Apr., 1980, Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF (Patriotic Front) party won by a comfortable margin, and he became prime minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe when independence from Britain was achieved on Apr. 18, 1980. He has ruled the country ever since. Human rights violations in Zimbabwe have continued unabated throughout his rule. Mugabe's government has assaulted the media, the political opposition, civil society activists, and human rights defenders. Police and state agents arbitrarily arrest and detain peaceful activists, and engage in torture and ill-treatment of government critics while in detention. The early months of 2006 were marked by food shortages, which led to hyperinflation throughout the year; in Aug., 2006, the inflation forced the government to replace its existing currency with a revalued one. Continuing economic problems led to a series of strikes in Zimbabwe in early 2007. In March a number of opposition leaders, including MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, were severely beaten and arrested by the police. These acts provoked widespread international condemnation. *Mugabe's party chose him as its candidate for the 2008 presidential election.*