

# ALERT UNIT MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nº 13, February 2007



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## HEADLINES OF THE MONTH

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- **ZIMBABWE:** The police forbid the holding of meetings and demonstrations for three months in Harare after hindering violently the start of the MDC's electoral campaign.
- **NIGERIA (NIGER DELTA):** The number of kidnappings in the region during January exceeds the total amount of abductions in 2006, while the armed opposition group MEND demands foreigners to evacuate the area, warning of the imminent start of a war.
- **PALESTINE:** According to the Israeli organization Peace Now, the Jewish settlement blocks continue to grow and to get deeper into the West Bank.
- **DR CONGO:** The new Government is formed with an important presence of former members of President J. Kabila's government.
- **THAILAND:** A coordinated attack in the south of the country with more than 20 simultaneous bombs provokes various deaths and aborts the rapprochement towards the insurgent groups initiated by the Government.

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- **AFGHANISTAN:** Civil society organisations alert against a bill that could guarantee immunity for the war crimes committed in Afghanistan during the armed conflict.
- **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** The International Court of Justice acquitts Serbia of legal responsibility and direct complicity with genocide in Bosnia, although it finds Serbia guilty of failing to prevent genocide in the city of Srebrenica.
- **INDONESIA (SULAWESI):** Civil Society leaders demand the division of the Poso district taking into account confessional criteria to avoid communitarian tensions, which have escalated in the last months.
- **KYRGYZSTAN:** The appointment by the Parliament of a new Prime Minister following the third presidential proposal avoids another immediate political crisis, but maintains unsolved the structural tensions.
- **LEBANON:** The death of three people in an explosion in north-eastern Beirut raises fear of an outbreak of sectarian violence in the country.
- **NEPAL:** In parallel to the increasing violence in Southern Nepal, political parties reach an agreement aiming to halt it.
- **RUSSIA (CHECHNYA):** The Chechen Parliament approves on proposal of V. Putin the appointment of R. Kadyrov as the new Chechen President, accused by national and international NGO of collusion with massive human rights violations.
- **SOMALIA:** In parallel to the escalation of violence and criminality in Mogadishu, UN Security Council approves the establishment of a peace mission for Somalia.
- **SRI LANKA:** Norway makes a new offer to the Government and the LTTE to relaunch the peace process after an escalation of violence during several months.
- **SUDAN (DARFUR):** Sudanese governmental representatives meet several members of the NRF armed group, which is seen as a sham by the SLA.
- **TURKMENISTAN:** The presidential elections, held in a context of control and lack of democratic liberties, confirm as new President the official candidate, G. Berdymukhammedov, who announces light reforms amidst firm continuity.
- **TURKEY – IRAQ:** The Vice-president of Iraq announces that its country will adopt measures against the Kurdish opposition armed group PKK, but warns against potential unilateral Turkish operations in Iraqi territory.
- **UGANDA:** The cessation of hostilities between the Government and the LRA ends in parallel to the stagnation of the peace talks following the LRA demands to change the Sudanese mediation in the peace process.

- **CÔTE D'IVOIRE:** The exploratory dialogue between Côte d'Ivoire's presidential FPI party and *Forces Nouvelles* starts.
- **GUINEA:** The trade unions and political opposition forces approve the appointment of L. Kouyate as new Primer Minister and put an end to the general strike.
- **BURUNDI:** The verification mechanism for the peace agreement between the Government of Burundi and the FNL begins to work after months os standstill in the peace process.
- **INDIA – PAKISTAN:** Both countries reaffirm their commitment to the peace process in spite of the attack that has caused nearly 70 deaths.
- **UNITED KINGDOM (NORTHERN IRELAND):** In a historic decision *Sinn Fein* accepts to support the Northern Ireland police, a condition established as essential in the devolution of power process.
- **IRAQ:** Iran, the US and Syria are ready to participate in the next international peace conference in Bagdad to deal with the violence in the country.
- **TIMOR-LESTE:** The Commission on Truth and Friendship, established by the governments of Timor Leste and Indonesia, starts the public audiences on violent episodes that took place in 1999.



## ISSUE OF THE MONTH

### Guinea: the end of a crisis, the beginning of a new path.

After a month and a half of general strike, the calm seems to have returned to Guinea with the appointment of the new Prime Minister Lansana Kouyaté, former Subsecretary General of the Economic Community West Africa (ECOWAS) and Guinea's Ambassador before the UN in 1997. Given the enormous pressure exerted by the trade unions and the population in general, which brought all production to a halt, and in view of the mediation by the ECOWAS through a diplomatic special mission headed by the former Nigerian President, Ibrahima Babangida, the Guinean President, L. Conté, had no option but to approve by decree the appointment of the candidate proposed by the mobilized civil society groups .

The former presidential supporters have been considerably reduced in view of the serious political and social opposition awakened by the uncountable corruption cases, the strong repression and the total collapse of the Guinean economy with the awful management by its main leader. As an example, the Parliament, controlled by the political parties closer to L. Conté, decided unanimously not to prorogue the siege state decreed by the President during 10 days, considering that this measure would not solve the national crisis and that it was even contributing to its worsening. The strike began on the 10th of January with denounces of power abuses committed by the Head of the State and the increase in the prices of fuel and basic food items. Then followed a brief break on the 7th of February, when L. Conté promised to appoint a new Prime Minister, and it resumed two days after the name

of the new person in charge was made public, Eugène Camara, a politician considered by the opposition as a puppet of the President. The scene that follows the massive strike and the more than 113 deaths caused by the tough response of the State security forces does not seem to be encouraging for the recently arrived L. Kouyaté. Nevertheless, several national and international politicians and analysts coincide to point out that the former diplomat will be able to begin the necessary reforms to pick up the country if he succeeds in working independently, appointing a new Government composed by technocrats and keeping apart L. Conté's Ministers and even the President itself from its decisions. One of the major keys will be the relaunching of the economy and ensuring that the incomes obtained by the exploitation of bauxite (mineral used for producing aluminium of which Guinea has a third of world's production) are invested in economic and social improvements that imply a relief for nine and a half million of Guineans. In this sense, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has called the international community to increase its economic cooperation with the new Guinean Government to make possible the reform process and to support the country efforts to end poverty, promote development, good governance and respect for human rights and law. Likewise, ending impunity, allowing the investigation of the deaths of more than one hundred people, most of them unarmed civilians, that took place during the strike, would be a good beginning to show Guinean people that there is a real will of change by the Government.



## ARTICLES, REPORTS AND PRESS RELEASES

- Finding new words, creating new methods. The participation of women in peace processes. Published in CIP-FUEHM.
- Mauritania under construction: a chance for a low or a high profile transition?
- (Human) Security in Central America: A return to the Past?. Published in Afers Internacionals, num. 76 (CIDOB).
- Finding a solution for the political instability in Guinea: an imperative for peace in Western Africa. Press Release, 14th February.

## AGENDA

Presidential Elections in Mauritania	11th of March ( and second round on the 25th of March)
Parliamentary Elections in Estonia.	4th of March
Parliamentary Elections in Northern Ireland.	7th of March
Parliamentary Elections in Finland	18th of March
Parliamentary Elections in Benin.	25th of March
Presidential Elections in Hong Kong.	March
Parliamentary Elections in Qatar.	March
Parliamentary Elections in Syria.	March

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