



# GET YER ROCKS OFF!

**“In Iraq, there was a government holding valuable resources the U.S. could not control. So the U.S. took action. In the Congo, the U.S. controls the government and the resources, so it doesn't really matter that millions of Congolese are dying.” - Prof. Didier Gondola, author of “The History of Congo” (Greenwood Press 2002).**

“The United States cannot afford to write off any potential new export market. A vast and growing market of 700 million consumers, Africa is in many ways the last frontier for U.S. exporters and investors. We cannot stand idly by waiting for Africa to achieve perfection before we engage actively in helping to shape its future. If we temper our engagement, or hold back until the whole of Africa is on even footing, we will concede important opportunities to our competitors and worse still, leave doors open to our adversaries...A visionary economic policy toward Africa is in our own long-term interest.” - Susan E. Rice, former US Govt. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

A week after African Liberation Day and in the week that Gob Beldof praised George Bush's policy on Africa, the United Nations continue to dither over whether or not to send a 'rapid reaction' peace-keeping force into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire, formerly Belgian Congo). Since 1998, civil war in the Congo has killed three and a half million civilians, both directly, and indirectly through starvation and disease. The war has also destroyed Congo's agriculture, economy and society. Less than 25% of its 55 million population have access to clean water, and three out of every four children born during the war have already died or will die before their second birthday. Professor Gondola says: “The real tragedy of this war is that it has attracted so little international attention...The death toll is higher than any conflict since World War II, and people don't seem to care.”

Last week, fighting broke out again in the northeastern province of Ituri, close to the border with Uganda, provoking Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to repeat their pleas to the UN to act on their Resolution 1296 of April 2000. This would allow setting up temporary security zones and safe corridors, for the protection of civilians and delivery of aid where there is threat of genocide and crimes against humanity. The two organisations consider the situation in the Congo a “critical test” of

the Security Council's commitment to the prevention of mass killing and the protection of civilians. While some member states are talking about helping out, their response can hardly be described as rapid.

Some say that the lack of any response is because the Congo lacks the strategic importance of Iraq, or is not close enough to home to bother about. Others are fundamentally racist as Professor Gondola points out: “The idea that tribes have been killing each other for centuries, that they don't know better, and there is nothing we can do about it.” Many more realistically though consider that the continuation of conflict is central to western (and in particular US) interests.

## ROCK'N'PAYROLL

Congo has been called the richest patch of earth on the planet. It holds millions of tons of diamonds, copper, cobalt, zinc, manganese, uranium, niobium and tantalum. These minerals are vital for the maintenance of US military and economic dominance. The US, which does not have a domestic supply of many essential minerals, identifies sources - many of them in Africa - then encourages US corporations to invest in and start mining. The US has had a piece of the Congo action since 1960 when the CIA staged a bloody coup, assassinating the country's first elected leader after independence from Belgian rule, and replaced him with their paid agent Mobutu Sese Seko. From 1965 to 1991, Congo (then Zaire) received more than \$1.5bn in US economic and military aid. Mobutu in turn was assassinated in 1996 when he tried to stop sharing the Congo's wealth with his Western backers.

The most recent wave of fighting could be linked to the discovery - by none other than Bush's old mates Bechtel who have worked hard since Mobutu's demise to make themselves indispensable to DRC's government - of vast stores of the mineral ore columbite-tantalite, better known as coltan. Coltan is vital to the manufacture of mobile phones, jet engines, night vision goggles, fibre optics, capacitors and computer chips. Coltan miners, working long hours in hazardous conditions, have no idea of the mineral's value, but the rebel groups that employ them do, and hundreds of millions of dollars have been made from illicit sales to the US, Europe and Asia. Rather than mak-

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For making fun of the President.**

The editor of the satirical Navinki newspaper, the only independent Belarusian anarchist paper was last week fined 700 Euros for publishing an article with “information known to be unfounded that discredits honour and dignity of the president.” The 5 year-old paper has now received two cautions from the Ministry of Information who have complained about two photographs, one “of the president of the Republic of Belarus with the comments of an insulting type” and another which “encroach on the people's morality.” After two cautions the paper can be closed.

ing the huge investments required to mine coltan safely, corporations are all too happy to get knock down price ore directly from whichever group controls a particular mine, ensuring the situation remains volatile, and the price stays cheap.

And while the US has been preaching peace, the flow of arms and military training into the Congo, and its neighbouring countries has continued.

Last October, an independent panel of experts reported to the UN that 85 multinational companies based in Europe, the US and South Africa had illegally profited from the war in Congo. The panel's investigations led to the conclusion that the war “has become mainly about access, control and trade” of minerals, predominantly coltan. Congo and the other 37 African states are all ‘benefiting’ from the US's African Growth and Opportunity Act, introduced by Clinton and embraced by Bush, so who cares about a few war casualties as long as the minerals keep flowing. As Susan E. Rice former US Govt. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs plainly put it “The US is now Africa's second largest industrial supplier. US companies have edged out European and Asian competition to complete major deals in the region.” In a world where profits are more important than people, western governments only seem to want to lend a helping hand to Africa when they are helping themselves to its resources.

\* Stop the Genocide Against Africans public meeting 6 June Bilt Mansions, 4-16 Deptford Bridge, London SE8 7pm 020 8265 1731 nkexplo@yahoo.co.uk

\* For more on Africa [www.yellowtimes.org](http://www.yellowtimes.org)  
[www.thirdworldtraveller.com](http://www.thirdworldtraveller.com)

## NO RIGHTS LEFT

Not content with creating 300 new crimes since Neo-Labour came to power, David Blunkett managed a couple of weeks back to sneak his authoritarian orgy of a Criminal 'Justice' Bill through parliament - with a whole load of extra amendments stitched onto it at the last minute that had never been subject to any parliamentary scrutiny. Even the super-mad Tory Anne Widdecombe described it as 'extremely dangerous'.

The extras include the extension of the amount of time people suspected of terrorism can be held without charge. Meanwhile, the main body of the Bill - which goes to the Lords on the 16<sup>th</sup> June - is making sure the balance of the law will always remain firmly in favour of the State, in what Helena Kennedy QC has called a "confidence trick" with the intention of doing something "quite frightening to civil liberties."

And how about these for some erosions of YOUR basic rights?

**GOING.** The right to a trial by jury - starting with ones they reckon 'ordinary' people are too thick to get to grips with like fraud or cases that go on for a long time. MPs, lawyers and civil rights campaigners alike are warning that this can readily be extended to any or all cases where the State's intentions run the risk of being thwarted by 12 members of the public.

**GOING.** The double jeopardy rule which means you can't be tried twice for the same crime.

**GONE.** This is Tony's favourite: prosecutors will now be allowed to cite previous misconduct. Liberty warns "this will result in convictions not because the defendant has committed an offence, but because he is the type of person who commits offences".

And coming soon will be the admission of hearsay evidence, something someone says they heard about the defendant - you know, like you heard that Arabic looking man who runs the corner shop was a terrorist. Be careful what you say down the pub!

And there's still loads more new crimes in the pipeline, with the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill also currently going through parliament. If you haven't already got a criminal record this could be your chance - riding a bike on the pavement for example will soon be a criminal offence.

Meanwhile, the government's hatred of young people passes into the statute books with draconian measures aimed at making sure children are neither seen nor heard. More than two youths standing together on the street, for example, will soon be committing an offence. This comes as a report by Lord Carlisle highlights a ninefold increase in the number of under-15s being sent to jail, in clear breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One of the most controversial new powers Blunkett's giving the cops will be to remove under-16s from the street if they reckon a member of the public feels 'intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed' by them. If you feel intimidated, harassed, alarmed and distressed by this government... you know what to do.

More info: Liberty - 020 7403 3888 [www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk](http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk)

## CLIMATE CRIMES

The day before ExxonMobil's AGM people from Greenpeace's Global Warming Crimes Unit shut down their head office in Texas. Some secured themselves to the main gate, while others arriving in limos managed to get into the offices. Exxon have been running a 10-year campaign of sabotage against international efforts to solve global warming, donating millions of dollars to ultra-conservative groups that aggressively lobby against action to protect our climate. [www.dontbuyexxonmobil.com](http://www.dontbuyexxonmobil.com)

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## SchNEWS in brief

**Indymedia** are having a new volunteers meeting next Wednesday (4) 7.30pm London Activist Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. [imc-london@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-london@indymedia.org) \*\* There's a **Frock On! Festival** next Saturday (7) organised by Glasgow's Cailleach Collective. Free workshops for women covering massage, bike mechanics, spoken word, co-ops/collectives, anti racist action, belly dancing. 10am - 5pm (workshops); 8pm-12am(bands). Govanhill Neighbourhood Centre, 6 Daisy Street, Glasgow (workshops); Queen's Park Glass House (bands). Workshops are free; gig is £3-£5 [www.geocities.com/frock\\_on](http://www.geocities.com/frock_on). \*\* For another take on **SARS** check out [www.whatareweswallowing.freereserve.co.uk/coughandawe.htm](http://www.whatareweswallowing.freereserve.co.uk/coughandawe.htm) \*\* Brain Haw has been protesting against sanctions and war in a **continious picket** outside Parliament for 2 years on Monday! Please send an anniversary card to him at Parliament Square, London SW1. 020 8806 6272 [www.voicesuk.org](http://www.voicesuk.org) \*\* Privacy International have launched a **Know your data** campaign in the UK to get people to write to their telecommunications companies asking for details of records held on them. For model letters go to [www.privacy.org/pi/countries/uk/surveillance/sar\\_isp.html](http://www.privacy.org/pi/countries/uk/surveillance/sar_isp.html) \*\* A meeting has been called to create 'new networks of solidarity and resistance: a co-ordination **HUB**' next Sunday (8) Eton Mission Social Centre, 91 Eastway, Hackney Wick, London E9, 2pm [www.hub.org.uk](http://www.hub.org.uk) \*\* Next Thursday (5) there will be a report back from people returning from Palestine and their meetings with **Israeli Peace Groups**. It's at Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (behind central library) 7.15pm \*\* Meeting next weekend (6-8) to co-ordinate occupying a **prison construction** site in France. It's at Brooklyn Squat, 9 Rue de Fauchier, just off the Marceau roundabout, Marseille. Tel: 0033612389628 [butterfly@resiste.net](mailto:butterfly@resiste.net)

## Positive SchNEWS

For 15 years the Yellow House in Liverpool has successfully provided a space for young people, mostly from the inner cities, who wouldn't usually be likely to get involved in the theatre, to get off the streets and take part in plays that deal with real everyday issues.

The theatre project called the "Theatre of Exposure" puts on performances that aren't scripted, and in which the players are entirely themselves, most often making statements about growing up in inner-city Liverpool through the mediums of poetry and music. The project's success has seen young people making their own films and take part in exchanges in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa.

More information: [www.yellowhouse.info](http://www.yellowhouse.info)

## TRIBAL AND STRIFE

Seven low-ranking members of the Indonesian Special Forces have been convicted of causing the death of Papuan tribal leader Theys Eluay in November 2001. But the soldiers, three of whom remain in the army, have been given jail terms of only two to three and a half years, angering Papua's tribal peoples. Papua is home to around 250 different tribes and the largest number of uncontacted peoples outside Brazil. The island, occupied since 1963, has one of the world's most diverse linguistic cultures, containing just 0.01% of the world's population, but 15% of the world's known languages.

Reports of murder and violence at the hands of the Indonesian military continue and any Papuans who protest against their occupiers are likely to be threatened with arrest, interrogation and death.

More info: [www.survival-international.org/tc%20papua.htm](http://www.survival-international.org/tc%20papua.htm)

## jEMERGENCIA!

Latin America's own G8 summit took place in Peru last weekend. The annual Summit of the Presidents Rio Group of Latin American Countries, in Cusco, Peru, saw over a dozen Latin American Presidents come together to talk about how to rein in social unrest, whilst continuing to follow their crippling economic policies.

The summit's host, President Toledo obviously learnt a lot from the weekend, and on Wednesday (28<sup>th</sup>) declared a state of emergency to try and quell protests by striking teachers, transport workers, farmers, doctors and nurses that have been crippling the country for the past two weeks. The state of emergency has put the army in charge of national security for the next 30 days, and they didn't waste any time in moving in to remove protesters and roadblocks along the Pan-American Highway. Tear gas was fired on 5000 striking teachers in Chiclayo. It is believed that at least three people have died in the violence. Under the state of emergency, many rights are suspended, including the rights to assemble, to privacy, to protest and freedom of movement. This is the second time that Toledo has had to declare an emergency in his 2 years in power, his popularity has now slumped to an all time low as he's failed to deliver his promise of restoring democracy and prosperity to Peru. [www.peru.indymedia.org](http://www.peru.indymedia.org)

\* Keep up to date with the G8 Summit protests in France [www.indymedia.org/g8/](http://www.indymedia.org/g8/)

## EYES WIDE SHUT

A refugee who has sewn up his lips, ears and eyes to protest at the Home Office decision to try and remove him has finally won his right to stay in the UK. Abas Amini from Iran said he would rather die than return to a country where he has been repeatedly imprisoned for his political poetry. In 2001 he was forced to flee, leaving behind his wife and young family.

200 people including refugees and asylum seekers, neighbours and other supporters gathered outside his home on Wednesday morning to show their solidarity with him - and by the afternoon the Home Office had backed down. As SchNEWS went to press Amini remains on hunger strike saying he is protesting not only for himself but also for all families whose rights have been violated by the UK government. "One of those families is my family and I think they would give me this right to lose my life for their happiness and a better life for others."

Support Amini via [Jorobdansam@aol.com](mailto:Jorobdansam@aol.com)

International Federation of Iranian Refugees  
0115 9859546 [www.hambastegi.org](http://www.hambastegi.org)

## ...and finally...

Imagine being in a courtroom trying to overturn a parking ticket, when the judge suddenly accuses you of being a terrorist. This happened to Anissa Khoder an Arab-American woman from New York who was asked if she was a terrorist as she approached the judge's table. After completing her submission he said "You don't really want to pay these tickets, do you?" and then complained that she had money to support terrorists but not pay the ticket! The woman panicked and collapsed with an anxiety attack, probably fearful that she could be locked up without trial under the US's lovely Patriot Act.

The woman has made a complaint against the judge to the state Commission on Judicial Conduct, and the judge admitted his comments may have been inappropriate. Both her parking tickets were dismissed. [www.nyjournalnews.com/newsroom/052103/a0121tarryjudge.html](http://www.nyjournalnews.com/newsroom/052103/a0121tarryjudge.html)

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to stay at home and watch the riots at the upcoming G8 Summit in France on TV. Honest!