



IJCSL NEWSLETTER

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

INTERNATIONAL—SECOND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL "RIGHT TO KNOW DAY" OBSERVED

To signify the global movement for promotion of the right to information and transparent governance, Freedom of Information (FOI) Advocates in several countries observed 28 September 2004 as international "Right to Know Day."

FREEDOMINFO.ORG highlighted the celebration by posting a [summary](#) of 25 news stories from around the world based on records released through FOI access laws.

In a related development, a [pilot survey monitoring freedom of information was released by the Open Society Justice Initiative](#). The survey, which was conducted in Armenia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Peru, and South Africa, reveals that "on average only 35 percent of requests for information were fulfilled," and that "lack of political will, inadequate information management, insufficient training of public officials, and an excess of bureaucratic obstacles to timely information release" are the major hurdles for effective implementation of FOI laws. However, an important result of the survey shows that a short timeframe for the release of the requested information (for example, in Peru information must be released within seven days of a request) can play an important role in obtaining positive responses from government officials.

INTERNATIONAL—GUIDELINES FOR NEW DISCLOSURE POLICY ISSUED BY IFC

The [International Finance Corporation](#) (IFC) has released a [Concept Paper](#), providing a framework for a new approach to its "Policy on Disclosure of Information," according to the news article published by [FREEDOMINFO.ORG](#) on 7 September 2004. The concept paper does not define exactly what documents will be disclosed, so the general presumption is that access to certain core information would remain classified. IFC plans to conduct four rounds of public consultation of its policy review process from [September to December 2004](#).

MACEDONIA—PUBLIC DEBATE ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Parallel to the preparation of the draft-Law on Free Access to Information, twelve public debates are planned in Macedonia. According to a [ONEWORLD](#) news article of 3 September 2004, these public debates are designed to "increase the level of information on access to information" in Macedonia. The Media Development Centre is conducting the public debates pursuant a project financed by the CARDS programme established by the European Commission.

NIGERIA—HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSES FREEDOM OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION BILL

The Nigerian House of Representatives passed "perhaps the most important bill in the fight against corruption and the enthronement of transparency and accountability in government when it overwhelmingly passed the Freedom of Access to Information Bill," according to an editorial first published by [VANGUARD](#) and reprinted at [ALLAFRICA.COM](#) on 1 September 2004. The Bill, which makes it a criminal offence



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for any public official to hoard information, must pass through the Senate and receive the approval of the President before it becomes law.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO—LAW ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION UNDER REVIEW

The draft “Law on Access to Information” in Serbia and Montenegro has now been completed and is being reviewed by the government, according to an article published by [ONEWORLD](#) on 9 September 2004. The draft, which took nearly two years to complete, is expected to be tabled in Parliament by the end of 2004. The president of the Montenegro Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (MHC) hailed the draft and asserted that it would be an important law to guarantee the transparency and openness of the government. Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro are the only three Balkan countries which do not have proper legislation on access to information.

SOUTH EAST EUROPE—BUDVA DECLARATION ON “FREEDOM OF INFORMATION” ADOPTED

The “[Budva Declaration](#)” which calls for “speedy adoption of FOI laws in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, in line with international standards and containing a presumption of openness” was adopted at the regional meeting on the Freedom of Information held in Budva, Montenegro, from 9 to 10 September 2004.

Representatives of regional and foreign NGOs, members of the FOI Advocates Network, and officials of central and local governments in the countries in the region attended the meeting and discussed the problems faced in carrying out the FOI laws. The meetings also highlighted the importance of civil society participation in drafting as well as implementation of FOI law. The [Open Society Justice Initiative](#) reported this development in a news release on 10 September 2004.

FISCAL MATTERS

BRAZIL—TAX INCENTIVES FOR DONATIONS UNDERUTILIZED IN BRAZIL

According to a report in the [ALLIANCE EXTRA - September 2004 Issue](#), “Corporate and individual givers in Brazil fail to take full advantage of tax incentives on donations.” These and other key findings of a research study recently released by [Grupo De Institutos Fundações E Empresas](#) (GIFE) will be discussed in more detail in the October 2004 issue of **IJCSL**.

CANADA—DRAFT LEGISLATION ON THE TAX REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR CHARITIES RELEASED

The [Federal Department of Finance, Canada](#) has released a package of [draft amendments](#) to the [Income Tax Act](#) and other related acts, according to a Finance Department [news release](#) on 16 September 2004. This draft includes the proposed legislation to implement the changes to the tax regulatory environment for charities, [proposed in the 2004 budget](#) and discussed in **IJCSL** in its [April 2004 issue](#). Some of the newly proposed rules (in particular, the disbursement quota rules) appear to be unfavorable for some charities, according to Miller Thomson LLP's [Charities and Not-for-Profit Newsletter](#) September 2004.



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SOUTH AFRICA—GIVING IS PART OF SOCIAL FABRIC

According to a recent report, 93 percent of South Africans either contribute time, money, or goods to causes that help the poor and the needy. The overall view was that South Africans believe in contributing to the greater good of the society and the country of South Africa. Tax incentives are provided for monetary gifts to charities of various types. The report on giving is available at [The Southern African Grantmakers' Association](#) website.

UNITED STATES—COURT ORDERS STRICTER CAMPAIGN FINANCE REGULATIONS OF TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS

Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the United States Federal District Court for the District of Columbia issued an [opinion on 18 September 2004](#) ordering the [US Federal Election Commission](#) to create tougher campaign finance regulations. Of particular note is the fact that the decision in *Christopher Shays v. FEC* relates to the regulations governing third-party fund-raising groups known as “Section 527 committees,” political advocacy groups that are independent of political candidates and parties and are capable of raising unlimited amounts of money to spend on election-related activities. These organizations have become increasingly important to the current U.S. presidential campaign, as they spend considerable sums on television advertisements attacking the character of presidential candidates. What is unclear is the degree to which a 527 committee may “coordinate” its activities with political candidates and parties without running afoul of more stringent campaign finance laws. With less than six weeks until the American presidential elections, it is likely that the existing regulations will continue to be applied and that no changes will be made in them, if at all, until after the election.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

BAHRAIN—CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CLOSED DOWN ON GROUNDS OF CONTRAVENING ASSOCIATION LAWS

The [Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Bahrain](#) ordered the closure of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) on 28 September 2004, alleging that the activities of the Centre violated the “[Associations Law of 1989](#).” The Chief Executive of the Centre was also detained last week, when he criticized the government economic policies and human rights abuses, according to a news story published by the [GUARDIAN](#) on 29 September 2004. The closure of the Centre has been viewed as a blow to democratic reforms in the country.

BAHRAIN—DRAFT LAW ON SOCIETIES CRITICIZED

Members of Bahrain's political societies have expressed grave concern over the newly proposed political societies draft law which would be discussed in Parliament during its session beginning 9 October 2004, according to a report published in [GULF DAILY NEWS](#) on 27 September 2004. Political activists and human rights groups described the law as a “major blow to freedom in Bahrain because it restricts participation in the political process.” The law governs the formation and activities of political societies



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and imposes strict jail sentences of up to life imprisonment for those who violate it. Parliament has already approved the draft in a first reading, and the bill is now in Cabinet and will be sent back for final approval to the Parliament in its next session.

SOUTH KOREA—LABOR LAW CONTINUE TO VIOLATE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION PRINCIPLES

Serious violations of trade union rights are a major problem in Korea, according to a new International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) report "[Internationally Recognised Core Labour Standards in Korea](#)." The report states that there are "serious restrictions on the right to organize, form trade unions, right to strike for a long list of essential services, and the avenue of mandatory arbitration is often used to delay or stall negotiations." The report, which was released on 15 September 2004 in connection with the WTO's review of trade policies in Korea, urges the government of Korea to underpin the right to strike and revise legislation to conform to the accepted international standards on freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

ARGENTINA—COMMUNITY RADIO GROUPS ADVOCATE NEW BROADCASTING LAW

A group of community radio stations in Argentina is advocating a new [National Broadcasting Law](#). The new law would replace and liberalize the 1982 law that restricts radio and television activities, according to the [EL INDEPENDIENTE](#) online edition of 28 August 2004.

BRAZIL—COURT PREVENTS NEWSPAPER FROM PUBLISHING REPORT ON GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION

A Brazilian court prohibited the newspaper [DIARIO DE MARÍLIA](#) from publishing material about alleged corruption in the city government, according to a news article published by [JORNAL DO TERA](#) on 10 September 2004. The newspaper [responded by criticizing the court ruling](#), terming it an act of censorship.

CHINA—FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CONTINUES TO BE RESTRICTED

The Chinese Government continues to arrest and imprison journalists for publishing their political views and material, it censors independent publications, and it blocks the websites of media outlets and human rights groups, according to a [REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS press release of 28 September 2004](#). The group also states that the Chinese press withheld coverage of the public demonstrations that took place at the Communist Party Plenum in September; the government also prevented foreign journalists from covering those events. REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS demanded that the European Union should take serious notice of these grave violations of freedom of expression as it holds a human rights dialogue with China.



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ETHIOPIA—CPJ CALLS FOR REPEAL OF CRIMINAL DEFAMATION

The Government of Ethiopia faced renewed calls to repeal criminal penalties for press offenses after the country's last remaining imprisoned journalist was released. On 7 September 2004 the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#) issued a news alert making these demands. Tewodros Kassa was freed after serving a sentence of more than two years. Although his release means there are currently no Ethiopian journalists in jail, many are still facing prosecution for alleged criminal offenses, including defamation.

GEORGIA—PRIVATE TV COMPANIES RAISE OBJECTIONS TO DRAFT LAW ON BROADCASTING

Private TV companies have raised several objections to the [Draft Law on Broadcasting](#). According to a news article published by [CASCFEN](#) on 13 September 2004, the companies contend that the draft law would impose censorship on private broadcasting companies, require TV towers to be handed over to state TV, require publication of free political and social advertisements, and restrict the terms of licenses for private broadcasting companies.

KAZAKHSTAN—DRAFT MEDIA LAW CONTAINS IMPORTANT PROTECTIONS FOR MASS MEDIA

At a meeting held in Almaty in early September, the Congress of Journalists of Kazakhstan discussed its version of the draft law on Mass Media; it hopes to submit this draft for consideration by Parliament sometime soon. [CASCFEN](#) reported on 5 September 2004 that the draft would eliminate criminal responsibility for libel and would implement a punishment regime for officials who refuse to give journalists information they need. It is a complex piece of legislation, which includes amendments to the law on licensing and to the administrative and criminal codes.

PANAMA—LEGISLATION TO REGULATE JOURNALISM INTRODUCED

A draft law which introduces regulations to control media and journalism has been introduced in the Congress of Panama, according to a news report published by [LA PRESNA](#) on 14 September 2004. The draft law would require reporters to have a university diploma in order to work, would establish minimum salary requirements, and would establish a federal council to enforce the laws affecting journalists.

THAILAND—REPEAL OF CRIMINAL DEFAMATION LAW URGED

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has urged the repeal of criminal defamation law in Thailand, according to a [statement](#) released on 3 September 2004. AHRC charges that section 328 of the Penal Code, which subjects a person to a fine of 200,000 Thai baht and two years' imprisonment for criminal defamation, is contrary to international law and the 1997 Constitution, which guarantee freedom of expression.



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UKRAINE—PUBLIC HEARINGS HELD ON THE DRAFT LAW “ON THE INTERCEPTION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS”

Public hearings regarding the draft law “On the interception of telecommunications” were held in Kiev, Ukraine, according to a news article of 7 September 2004 published by [DIGITAL MEDIA NEWS FOR EUROPE](#). Participants at the hearings supported the latest version of the draft law, which would establish mechanisms to monitor the “activities of the law enforcement bodies in the interception and monitoring of telecommunications, while guaranteeing the observance of human and civil rights.”

UZBEKISTAN—INTERNEWS BRANCH SUSPENDED

The Tashkent city court ordered the suspension of the activities of Internyus - a locally registered branch of Internews -- for a six-month period for breach of internal regulations and technical violations of the Uzbek laws on Noncommercial, Nongovernmental Organizations of 1999, according to a news article published by [INTERNEWS](#) on 16 September 2004. The court order was based on Internyus’ failure to report the correct size of its board and a change of address as well as inadequate reports on its activities. International media rights groups have expressed deep concern, for they see this court order as a government crackdown on independent media and non-governmental organizations for insignificant breaches

WEST AFRICA—MEETING OF JOURNALISTS TO DISCUSS MEDIA FREEDOM

A network of lawyers sponsored by the [Media Foundation for West Africa](#) will attend a meeting in early November in Accra, Ghana. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss strategies for protecting journalists' rights in the region. Lawyers from eight different countries in West Africa will participate in the meeting, along with representatives from media associations and free expression advocates to discuss ways to ensure that legal advice is quickly available to journalists who face government repression.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

AZERBAIJAN—PERMISSION TO TRAVEL DENIED TO REPRESENTATIVE OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

Ilgar Ibrahimoglu Allahverdiev, a religious freedom activist and imam of the Azerbaijani Muslim community, was barred from taking part in an OSCE Conference on “Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination,” discussed in more detail below, according to an article published by [FORUM 18 NEWS SERVICE](#) on 16 September 2004. Ibrahimoglu was invited to take part in the conference as a representative of Azeri NGOs and religious organizations, but Azeri authorities blocked his effort to leave Azerbaijan at the Baku airport on 12 September 2004. In his absence, the only Azerbaijani representative at the conference was the government delegate.



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EUROPE—REGIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN BRUSSELS

[The OSCE Conference on “Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination”](#) was held in Brussels on September 13-14, 2004. The conference was attended by more than 700 government officials, leaders of non-governmental organizations, and expert speakers. It ended with a declaration condemning, in clear terms, all forms of racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism, while urging OSCE participating States to respond effectively to acts motivated by intolerance. In connection with that event, several other developments are worth noting.

- **SURVEY OF SERIOUS DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS AGAINST RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS PUBLISHED**

Ahead of the OSCE Conference [FORUM 18 NEWS SERVICE](#) surveyed some of the more serious discriminatory actions against religious believers in OSCE countries. According to the survey, actions restricting religious freedom continue to occur in some OSCE member countries. FORUM 18 believes that these measures are blatant contraventions of fundamental principles of the OSCE and clearly violate the foundations of a democratic society

- **REPORT ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS PUBLISHED**

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) released a new report “[Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Selected EU Member States](#)” which discusses concerns such as hostile attitudes, biased media reports, discrimination, political intolerance, law enforcement actions, and other restrictive measures aimed at Muslims. The report was presented to The IHF expressed a concern that a negative attitude towards Muslims will encourage further radicalization, and it called on the EU member states to ensure that their treatment of Muslim minorities fully corresponds with EU and international standards.

INTERNATIONAL—INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT FOR 2004 RELEASED

On [15 September 2004](#), the U.S. Department of State released the “[International Religious Freedom Report for 2004](#),” according to [U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs](#). This is the sixth Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, which includes individual country chapters examining the status of religious freedom worldwide. Several governments criticized in the report, including [Burma](#), [Vietnam](#), [China](#), and [Saudi Arabia](#), which have rejected the U.S. criticism.

ITALY—NUN REFUSED ID CARD BECAUSE OF HAIR COVERING

A nun in the central Italian city of L’Aquila was initially told that a photo of her wearing a habit was not acceptable for the national ID card – the rejection of a Muslim woman’s photo for the same reason was cited as the rationale, according to an [IAFRICA.COM](#) news article of 7 September 2004. As a result of the ensuing criticism,



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local officials, still maintaining their stance of neutrality, are now apparently accepting photos from all women wearing head coverings.

NIGERIA—HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATED UNDER THE COVER OF SHARI'A LAW

Introduction of Shari'a criminal law in Northern Nigeria was broadly appreciated and encouraged by Muslims hoping it would deliver an improved justice system. Support for the more extreme forms of Sharia punishment has now faded. An 111-page report released by [Human Rights Watch](#) on 21 September 2004 documents the way in which human rights have been violated in the four years since the introduction of Shari'a criminal law.

SERBIA—DRAFT LAW ON RELIGION CALLED "A CHANNEL TO INSTITUTIONALIZE RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION"

Dr. Reinhard Kohlhofer, an Austrian lawyer described Serbia's draft Law on Religion as "a channel to institutionalize religious discrimination," for it "divides religious communities into different categories with differing rights," according to an article published by [FORUM18 NEWS SERVICE](#) on 2 September 2004. He notes that the present draft would lead to the "official state churches," and is the "worst example of legislation for religious communities in Western Europe."

VIETNAM—NEW ORDINANCE ON RELIGION PLACES IMPROPER LIMITS ON THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

The full English language text of the [Ordinance Regarding Religious Beliefs and Religious Organizations](#), which will go into effect on 15 November 2004, has been published by FREEDOM HOUSE. Paul Marshall of FREEDOM HOUSE's [Center for Religious Freedom](#) notes that Article 1 "guarantees the right of freedom of religious beliefs" and states that "Nobody is permitted to violate this freedom," but points out that "this statement is followed by 40 articles that gut this guarantee almost completely." Critics within Vietnam are also cited in Marshall's [NATIONAL REVIEW](#) article. They suggest that the Ordinance is merely a method of oppressing religion by means of law.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

UNITED STATES—NONPROFIT SECTOR TO PROVIDE INPUTS TO IMPROVE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE OF CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

In order to receive inputs and views of broader nonprofit sector, the [Senate Finance Committee](#), in its letter of [23 September 2004](#), requested that [Independent Sector](#) make recommendations to assist in the development of nonprofit governance and accountability legislation process. For this purpose Independent Sector, which is a coalition of nonprofits and grant-makers, would bring together representatives of the not-for-profit sector and experts in the field to provide inputs on the issues of relevance. It is expected that recommendations will be presented to the Committee in February 2005 and a final report in spring 2005.



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UNITED STATES—CALIFORNIA BILL SIGNED BY GOVERNOR

The “[The Nonprofit Integrity Act of 2004](#)” bill (SB 1262) was signed into law by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on 30 September 2004. As reported in August by **IJCSL-N**, this legislation is aimed at increasing the accountability of charities, but many NPO officials assert that the law, which goes into effect on 1 January 2005, will compel NPOs to restructure their operations and that the additional paperwork caused by the law will drain time and money from programs. In his signing statement the Governor indicated that he shares some of those concerns. The [full text of SB 1262, resolutions, amendments, status, history, votes, analyses](#) are available on the official site [California Legislative Information](#).

ZIMBABWE—DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED NGO BILL CONTINUES

Various developments in Zimbabwe with regard to the NGO Bill (discussed in detail in ICCSL’s comments, which will be published in the October issue of IJCSL), are reported on the website of the [Kubatana Trust](#). [NANGO](#), the national association of NGOs held a meeting of NGO leaders on 29 September 2004 to discuss approaches for lobbying against the Bill. In a related development, **IJCSL** Editor-in-Chief Professor Karla Simon has been appointed Chair of an American Bar Association Task Force that will draft comments on the Bill. For further information, please contact her at simon@law.edu.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

CHINA—DELEGATES TO THE ASEM PEOPLE'S FORUM V CALL FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The Chinese delegates participating in [Asia-Europe Meeting \(ASEM\) People's Forum V](#), which took place in Hanoi, Vietnam from 6 to 9 September 2004, called for a [greater role of civil society and NGOs to strengthen the linkages between Asia and Europe](#), according to CHINA DAILY news feature of 9 September 2004. The delegates emphasized that civil society and non-governmental organizations can play an important role to strengthen human security and global peace. The ASEM People's Forum is a network of Asian and European organizations which arranges parallel civil society conferences on the occasion of the official ASEM summits. More than 500 representatives from over 350 people's organizations in Asia and Europe participated in the forum.

INTERNATIONAL—UN SECRETARY GENERAL RELEASES INITIAL RESPONSE TO EMINENT PERSONS PANEL REPORT

In an [unedited, advance version of his report](#) released in September, the Secretary General has indicated that he approves of the recommendations made by the Eminent Persons Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations (see [IJCSL’s July issue for a discussion of the report of the Panel](#)). He is going to be making a series of specific recommendations to the General Assembly, including a recommendation that there be a single UN accreditation process for NGOs.



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UGANDA—GOVERNMENT VOWS TO IMPROVE CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

In a “[White Paper](#)” presented in the Cabinet, the government of Uganda has recommended a governmental reorganization, and a “political transition aimed to improve constitutional and democratic governance in the country,” according to [IRINNEWS](#) of 22 September 2004. The White Paper includes several recommendations, including a multi-party political system; limiting the number of terms the President; presidential, parliamentary, and district elections to be held the same day; the Human Rights Commission, the Inspectorate of Government and the Electoral Commission to be distinct and independent, according to [THE MONITOR](#) Kampala.

UNITED STATES—LOSS OF FAITH IN SECTOR REPORTED BY TWO SURVEYS

- According to an article published in the [GUIDESTAR](#) Newsletter for September 2004, “People don’t trust charities anymore.” August’s Question of the Month asked, “Do you believe that the public has more or less confidence in the nonprofit sector today than in the past?” The majority of GUIDESTAR’S reader—58 percent—responded they believe the public has less confidence. Only 19 percent feel there is more confidence today. Another 18 percent think confidence levels are about the same, and 5 percent are not sure.
- A [survey report](#) published on 13 September 2004 by the Brookings Institution revealed that the “number of Americans who express little or no confidence in charitable organizations increased significantly between July 2001 and May 2002,” and that “Americans continue to have serious concerns about the performance of nonprofits in exercising their fiduciary responsibilities.”

ZIMBABWE—NEW ELECTORAL LAWS DRAFTED

The government of Zimbabwe has drafted a new law on elections which require a new “independent electoral commission” to administer and supervise most aspects of elections, according to [SABCNEWS.COM](#) news article of 8 September 2004. The new law allows political parties to access the public media only during the five-week election period. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has decided to boycott elections until there is a complete overhaul of electoral system that implements the Southern African Development Community (SADC) principles and guidelines for elections. The draft bill is expected to be tabled before the parliament in October.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOK PUBLICATION—“ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE IF...”

Susan George's new book “[Another world is possible if...](#)” published by Verso Books in association with Transnational Institute in September 2004, is an important addition to our understanding of the world-wide citizens' movement for social justice and globalization.



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BOOK PUBLICATION—“LITIGATION UNDER THE FEDERAL OPEN GOVERNMENT LAWS 2004”

To mark the international Right to Know Day on 28 September 2004, the [Electronic Privacy Information Center](#) (EPIC) announced the publication of new FOIA Guide - “[Litigation Under the Federal Open Government Laws 2004](#).” This practical and comprehensive guide thoroughly discusses the federal open access laws in the United States, and includes recent case developments.

BOOK PUBLICATION—MEDIA RELATED LEGISLATION IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

A new book, “Harmonization of Media Legislation of South Caucasus Countries with European Standards,” was released on 15 September 2004, according to a [HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMENIA](#) news report of 16 September 2004. This book provides an overview and comparative analysis of the media-related legislation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. It also sets forth recommendations on how the legislation can be improved. This book is jointly authored by Armenia’s Committee for Speech Freedom Protection, Azerbaijan’s Press Club, and Georgia’s Association of Young Lawyers.

SURVEY PUBLICATION—“FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2004” RELEASED

“[Freedom in the World 2004](#)”-- FREEDOM HOUSE's annual global survey of political rights and civil liberties has been released, according to Freedom House’s [press release](#) of 23 September 2004.

SURVEY PUBLICATION—NON-PROFIT VOLUNTEER SECTOR IN CANADA

On 20 September 2004, the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) published a survey report titled “[The Cornerstones of Community: Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations](#),” conducted under the auspices of Voluntary sector initiative (VSI). The report describes major challenges and obstacles that are confronted by the sector, it includes thorough information on the country’s non-profit and volunteer organizations, and it describes the size and scope of the voluntary sector in Canada.

INTERNATIONAL—UN 57TH ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE GOES ON-LINE

On 7 September 2004, the NGO Section of the [United Nations Department of Public Information](#) (DPI) has launched a new [website](#) to cover the proceedings of the 57th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, “Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action,” which was held in New York from 8-10 September 2004. An archived section allows a space for future knowledge sharing and interactive dialogue.



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