



IJCSL NEWSLETTER

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ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

BAHRAIN—NEW COUNTER-TERRORISM LEGISLATION APPROVED

Bahrain's Parliament has [approved](#) a new counter-terrorism legislation titled "Protecting Society from Terrorists Acts." A news article published by [UN NEWS CENTRE](#) on 25 July 2006, reports that the Rapporteur on Human Rights for the United Nations has urged the Government of Bahrain to amend the new legislation and bring it in line with international human rights law. It is alleged the law could harm human rights in the country. Under the draft bill, the definition of terrorism is overly broad and restricts several civil liberties including freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and speech. The bill awaits approval by the Head of the State. [Analyzing the legislation](#), the Movement of Liberties and Democracy-Bahrain note that several articles in the bill blatantly violate human rights; they recommend introduction of amendments to make the bill conform with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICCPR, and other international documents.

GERMANY—GOVERNMENT TOUGHENS ANTI-TERROR LAW

The German government has approved updates to its antiterrorist legislation. According to a news article published by [PRENSA LATINA](#) on 15 July 2006, the law confers authority to the police to suppress any suspicious terrorist act and the prohibition of organizations formerly supported by religious freedom constitutional regulations. The government has also been given additional powers, including access of security forces to personal data on flights and vehicles, if required.

GLOBAL—FATF ADOPTS INTERPRETATIVE NOTE TO SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION VIII: NGOs

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recently adopted an [Interpretative Note clarifying the requirements of Special Recommendation VIII on non-profit organizations](#). The note further explains the objectives of the Recommendation and offers specific measures that countries should put into place to ensure that their non-profit sectors are not misused for terrorist financing purposes.

TURKEY—NEW ANTI-TERRORISM LAW AMENDMENTS CALLED SETBACK FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

See discussion below under **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

UNITED STATES--DEFENSE DEPARTMENT FUNDS STUDY TO LIMIT FOIA

See discussion below under **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

BERMUDA—PREMIER ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF FOI LEGISLATION

Freedom of information legislation could be introduced in Bermuda next year, according to a news article published by [THE ROYAL GAZETTE](#) on 10 July 2006. The



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legislation would be called the Public Access to Information law (PATI), and the implementation plan for the new legislation is almost complete.

GLOBAL—SURVEY OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS FOR 2006 RELEASED

On 4 July 2006, [FREEDOMINFO](#) released “[Freedom of Information Around the World 2006: A Global Survey of Access to Government Records Laws.](#)” The report gives an overview of the state of Freedom of Information Laws around the world. Sixty-eight countries now have access laws.

INDONESIA—GOVERNMENT STATE SECRECY BILL RESTRICTS PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

A proposed new Secrecy Bill is currently being drafted in the parliament. Critics have argued that the bill, if enacted, would interfere with the transparency of government policies. According to a news article published by [THE JAKARTA POST](#) on 27 June 2006, the new state secrets bill seeks to restrict foreigners’ access to information that could threaten national security. The draft bill proposes the establishment of a state secrets agency with the privilege of declaring certain information classified, reports [PLANET MOLE](#). The draft bill also proposes review of jail sentences for leaking, sharing, copying, recording or publicizing classified information. These offenses carry a maximum sentence of life in prison, and even the death sentence during wartime.

MALTA—GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF FOI ACT BY END OF 2006

The government intends publishing a Freedom of Information Act by year’s end, reports [BUSINESS TODAY](#) in a news article published on 19 July 2006. The article quoted to an official in the prime minister’s office, which is currently drafting legislation on the subject.

UNITED KINGDOM—LEAKED REPORT SUGGESTS GOVERNMENT WILL SEEK TO LIMIT INFORMATION ACCESS

[The Guardian Unlimited](#) has reported that the Government is already considering curbing Freedom of Information laws barely a year and a half after they came into force, it has been claimed. A leaked cabinet paper, prepared by Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs Lord Falconer, reveals plans to block “the most difficult requests” made by the public to Whitehall departments. It apparently suggests that a flat rate fee could be charged which would have a “deterrent effect” and “inhibit serial requesters.”

UNITED STATES—

• FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF FOIA CELEBRATED WITH MIXED EMOTIONS

In an Op Ed published in the [St. Paul Pioneer Press](#) on 4 July 2006, former President Jimmy Carter wrote as follows: “The U.S. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) turned 40 Tuesday, the day we celebrated our independence. But this anniversary was not a day of celebration for the right to information in our country. Our government leaders have become increasingly obsessed with



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secrecy. Obstructionist policies and deficient practices have ensured that many important public documents and official actions remain hidden from our view.”

- **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT FUNDS STUDY TO LIMIT FOIA**

St. Mary’s University School of Law will conduct a government-funded study of possible alterations to the Freedom of Information Act aimed at fighting terrorism. A news article published by [THE EAGLE](#) on 8 July 2006 reports that this one year project will explore ways to amend the current legislation so as to prevent terrorists from getting sensitive information about infrastructure (such as water, sewerage, electricity and transportation systems). The U.S. Defense Department is funding the study with a \$1 million grant.

FISCAL MATTERS

AUSTRALIA—VOLUNTEERS TO GET TAX BREAK

Proposals are underway to pay retired volunteers for their efforts and to give tax breaks to volunteers still in the workforce. According to a news article published by [WORLD VOLUNTEER WEB](#) on 4 July 2006, employed volunteers would be entitled to a personal income-tax deduction for the out-of-pocket expenses incurred in their volunteering. An independent taskforce has been set up to investigate options to remunerate volunteers and prepare a set of options within three months.

CANADA—SURVEY OF GIVING, VOLUNTEERING AND PARTICIPATING RELEASED

Imagine Canada has recently released the new results of the [Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating](#) (CSGVP), according to a news article published by [WORLD VOLUNTEER WEB](#) on 7 June 2006. The report presents highlights of the findings of the 2004 CSGVP. The report reveals the enormous range of giving, volunteering, and participating that occurs throughout Canada over the course of a year. It shows that in 2004, Canadians donated \$8.9 billion and two billion volunteer hours — the equivalent of a million full-time jobs.

CHINA—CONFERENCE ON CHINA CHARITY ENHANCEMENT LAW HELD IN VANCOUVER

The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ Central Legislation Office (CLO) has been tasked with drafting a new China Charity Enhancement Law (CCEL), which is hoped to be prepared and promulgated before 2008. This is a significant development for China as the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics will herald a “coming out party” for China and the desire to show the world that China is advancing in the development of the not-for-profit and charity sectors. [A conference was held at the University of British Columbia on 5-7 July 2006 to discuss these issues.](#)

INDIA—TAXATION LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2006 COMES INTO FORCE

The [Taxation Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2006](#) has received Presidential consent and came into force on 24 July 2006. According to a news article published by [INDLAW](#),



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among other features, the tax law has been amended to streamline approval and monitoring of some charities and scientific research bodies. It [prescribes](#) filing of returns by charitable entities with aggregate annual receipts below RS. one crore (approximately US \$215,000).

UNITED KINGDOM—EUROPEAN COMMISSION REQUESTS BRITISH GOVERNMENT STOP DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FOREIGN CHARITIES

The EC has warned the British government that failing to offer tax relief on gifts to charities registered elsewhere in the EU is illegal discrimination. Under current rules, British taxpayers are entitled to tax relief on charitable donations to a charity registered in the UK. According to a news article published by [CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION](#) on 11 July 2006, the European Commission has requested the British government to end what it terms discrimination against foreign charities. The executive body of the European Union (EU) says that the UK's policy of allowing tax relief only for donations to British charities, but not for charities registered abroad, is in breach of EU laws. British tax rules focus on the place of establishment of the charity rather than the location where it actually operates.

UNITED STATES—HOUSE PASSES H.R. 4 CONTAINING A VARIETY OF CHARITABLE REFORM PROVISIONS

On July 28, 2006 the House of Representatives passed legislation, which includes, among other changes in the tax laws a series of provisions aimed at tightening controls on charitable organizations and private foundations. [The summary of the bill is available from the Ways and Means Committee's mark-up.](#) The bill must now go to the Senate for further consideration. Some of the provisions are those previously discussed in IJCSL-N as [Independent Sector worked with the Senate Finance Committee to further the reform process.](#) It is unclear whether the legislation will be passed in this election year, and even if it is, what the exact provisions affecting charities will be, given the need for compromise between the House and Senate versions of the reform package.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

BAHRAIN—AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC ASSEMBLY LAW SIGNED

Bahrain's King Hamad bin Issa al-Khalifa has ratified a controversial law on public assembly, according to a news article published by the [GULF TIMES](#) on 21 July 2006. The law criminalizes unauthorized protests, prohibits foreign nationals from demonstrating, and bans demonstrations at certain public places such as hospitals, airports, and near diplomatic offices and other international organizations. Violators face jail terms of up to six months and/or fines.

BOTSWANA—GOVERNMENT SAID TO VIOLATE CORE ILO CONVENTIONS

The Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) has made a formal complaint against the government to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for what it



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views as gross and flagrant violations of the ILO core convention. A news article published by [MMEGI ONLINE](#) on 28 July 2006 reports that the government is alleged to have violated [C87 - Freedom of Association](#) and [C98 - Right to Collective Bargaining](#). Botswana has ratified both conventions.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE—CONCERN OVER BANS ON GAY PRIDE MARCHES

Many Council of Europe states (e.g., Latvia) and Russia have recently denied protection to gay pride demonstrations. According to a [viewpoint](#) posted on the Council of Europe website on 24 July 2006, critics note that the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 1988 that governments should refrain from interfering and at occasion must take positive measures to ensure an effective freedom of peaceful assembly. The writer cites to a recent [gay pride event in Montreal Canada](#), which took place with the fullest support of the Canadian federal and provincial authorities, as indicative of the proper attitude toward such events.

MALAYSIA—PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES RESTRICT STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Reports suggest that Malaysian public universities are repressing the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly of certain student societies. The SPF, CLF and GMMUPM student groups were harassed when they tried to distribute recruitment leaflets to recruit new members. According to a news article published by [SOUTHEAST ASIAN PRESS ALLIANCE](#) (SEAPA), the SPF, CLF and GMMUPM are student groups actively concern with local and global issues. They organize discussion groups on these issues and contest in student elections, championing for students democracy in campus decision-making. They were labeled illegal by their respective universities for not being registered.

TAIWAN—AMENDMENTS IN ASSEMBLY AND PARADE LAW UNDER CONSIDERATION

To protect citizens' right of peaceful assembly and demonstration, the People First Party is considering measures to revamp Taiwan's Assembly and Parade Law. According to a news article published by [TAIWAN NEWS](#) on 26 July 2006, the Assembly and Parade Law originated from the martial law period that ended in 1987. There have been complaints that the law is enforced selectively, depending on the type of assembly and its sponsors.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

BRAZIL—BILL SEEKING TO REGULATE JOURNALISM GOES BACK TO THE PARLIAMENT FOR RECONSIDERATION

After the President Ignacio Lula de Silva vetoed it, the bill regulating journalism has been returned to the parliament for reconsideration. According to a news article published by [REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS](#) on 27 July 2006, the bill would require sports commentators, journalism teachers, photographers, Web designers and others to have a journalism degree before working. It would also seek to set up a regulatory



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body to orientate, discipline and control the profession, issuing press cards and imposing administrative sanctions. Many viewed such provisions as too restrictive.

EGYPT—NEW PRESS LAW PASSED

On 10 July 2006 the Egyptian parliament passed a controversial press law despite protests by journalists and opposition activists who say the it puts new limits on press freedom. A news article published by [REUTERS](#) says that last minute amendments remove some media curbs. But the new law mandates jail for insulting public officials and foreign heads of state, according to [BBC NEWS](#).

GLOBAL—U.S. CONGRESS AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BOTH ACT TO PRESERVE INTERNET FREEDOM

In a bid to stop major Internet companies cooperating with regimes which restrict free expression and use personal information to track down and punish democracy activists, a draft “[Global Online Freedom Act of 2006](#)” has been introduced in U.S. Congress. If passed by Congress and the Senate, the bill would prohibit US companies from revealing the identity of a user to officials of an Internet-restricting country except for legitimate law enforcement. In addition, the EU Parliament passed a resolution on 18 July 2006, which commits the Member States to removing obstacles to Internet access in countries around the world. The resolution cites freedom of expression as “a key yardstick to judge whether a society is democratic and open.”

IRAN—EU COUNCIL CONDEMNS IRAN FOR VIOLATING FREE EXPRESSION RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS

The European Union on 26 July 2006 condemned Iran for human rights violations and urged Tehran to refrain from punishing individuals for expressing their thoughts. The 25-nation block expressed “serious concern about the deteriorating situation with regard to the freedom of expression and the status of human rights defenders in Iran,” according to a statement issued by the EU Council in Brussels and reported on by [Iran Focus](#).

KAZAKHSTAN—PRESIDENT SIGNS NEW MEDIA LAW

On 5 July 2006, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, signed the bill “On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Matters related to Mass Media.” According to a news article published by [IFEX](#), the legislation makes it mandatory for all media outlets to register for a license. It forbids any media outlet that uses the name of a previously closed media outlet from registering. Editors of previously banned media outlets can be barred from working for other publications, and media outlets must re-register whenever they undergo administrative changes, such as a new mailing address or new staff. Those who ignore the rules can be punished by stiff fines or risk being shut down.



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MALAYSIA—BOOKS ON ISLAM AND RELIGION BANNED

Malaysia's Ministry of Internal Security has banned 18 books on Islam and religion for their alleged potential to 'disrupt peace and harmony,' according to a news article published by [SOUTHEAST ASIAN PRESS ALLIANCE](#) (SEAPA) on 4 July 2006. The banned books include works of noted Islamic scholars Karen Armstrong and John Esposito. Ministry has banned over 45 books since 2003.

MALDIVES—ANALYSIS OF DEFAMATION BILL PUBLISHED

In a comprehensive analysis of the proposed defamation bill, the international freedom of expression NGO [Article 19](#) highlights "serious problems" with the proposed legislation, according to the news article published by [MINIVAN NEWS](#) on 21 July 2006. Article 19's [analysis](#) notes the bill fails to turn defamation into a civil rather than a criminal offense. This analysis suggests that if the bill is implemented in its current form it would seriously undermine freedom of expression in the Maldives. Recently, an independent group of international organizations undertook a fact-finding mission to the Maldives. The mission released an independent [assessment](#) of press freedom and freedom of expression in Maldives.

RUSSIA—NEW LAW ON EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES SIGNED

On 28 July 2006, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, signed the controversial changes to the law on extremist activity, which critics say could be used to silence opposition politicians and the press. A news article published by [THE MOSCOW TIMES](#) says that the lower house of the Russian Parliament approved the bill amending the "Law on Fighting Extremist Activity" on 13 July 2006. The new legislation broadens the definition of extremism to include media criticism of public officials, and violations of the law are punishable by up to three years' imprisonment for journalists and the suspension or closure of their publications.

TURKEY—

- **ANTI-TERRORISM LAW AMENDMENTS CALLED SETBACK FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Turkish President, Necdet Sezer, approved the [amendments to the Turkish Anti Terror Law](#) on 17 July 2006. With the passage of these amendments, the state of freedom of expression in Turkey has taken a steep downturn, according to a news article published by [IFEX](#) on 21 July 2006. NGOs and other stakeholders have geared up a [campaign](#) against its implementation. It is alleged that the amendments will restrict several civil liberties including citizen's rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and demonstration. The right to have and exchange information will also be seriously restricted.

- **EU ADVISES TURKEY TO REWRITE ITS PENAL CODE**

The European Commission has advised Turkey to again rewrite its penal code to meet EU standards to guarantee freedom of expression in Turkey. The warning came after the country's highest court confirmed a sentence against an editor for



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insulting “Turkishness,” according to the news article published by [THE PENINSULA](#) on 13 July 2006. The editor, a Turkish-born Armenian, was given a six-month suspended prison sentence last year for an article criticizing Article 301, which allows prosecutors to pursue cases against writers and scholars for “insulting Turkish identity.” Organizations monitoring media freedoms and rights in Turkey have observed a deteriorating situation in Turkey this year. [BIA](#) disclosed 56 “Freedom of Expression cases launched against 67 individuals from April through June.

ZIMBABWE—INTERCEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS BILL INTRODUCED

The controversial [Interception of Communications Bill](#), which will give Harare powers to snoop into citizens’ private communications, has been officially presented to Zimbabwe’s Parliament, according to a news article published by [ZIMBABWE JOURNALIST](#) on 27 July 2006. Among other things, the Bill seeks to establish a communications monitoring centre to enable authorities to pry into citizens’ telephone calls or emails. It would empower the Minister of Transport and Communications to authorize interceptions.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

BOLIVIA—MINISTER CALLS FOR BAR ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Bolivia’s education minister has called for legislation that would bar religious education from the country’s classrooms including those in Roman Catholic schools, according to a news article posted by [MIAMIHERALD](#) on 10 July 2006. Faced with strong opposition from Bolivia’s large Catholic population, [EIN News](#) reports that the President, Evo Morales, has said more recently that Catholicism will be taught alongside world religions, especially Bolivian Indian religions.

INDIA—

- **MADHYA PRADESH ASSEMBLY PASSES BILL AMENDING STATE RELIGION LAW**

The Madhya Pradesh Assembly has passed a controversial bill to amend the state’s Freedom of Religion Act of 1968 to prevent religious conversion by force or allurement, according to a news article published by [ZEE NEWS](#) on 25 July 2006. The amendments to existing legislation on religious freedom require all parties directly or indirectly involved in the process to communicate their intentions to a local district judge a month ahead of the religious ceremony, reports [ASIA NEWS](#). The applicant will be allowed to undergo the ceremony only after the magistrate is satisfied that the conversion was not done under duress or by deceit.

- **UP MAY INTRODUCE NEW LAWS GOVERNING RELIGIOUS PLACES**

The government of the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) is considering to propose a new law introducing control and restrictions on the management of Hindu temples and



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religious places. [ZEE NEWS](#) reported on 9 July 2006, that the government has already ordered a survey of temples and other religious places.

UNITED KINGDOM—COLLECTIVE WORSHIP RULES IN SCHOOLS EXPECTED TO BE RELAXED

School pupils aged 16 and above will have a legal right to absent themselves from collective worship, according to a news article published by [BBC NEWS](#) on 19 July 2006. The Education Minister, Lord Adonis, has adopted an amendment brought by the Liberal Democrat Baroness Walmsley to that effect. Under the current legislation, maintained schools in England and Wales “must provide daily collective worship for all registered pupils” that is “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.”

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ENGLAND AND WALES--CHARITIES BILL DEBATED IN HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMITTEE

Following the Second Reading on 26 June 2006, the Charities Bill was debated in Committee in the House of Commons between 4 and 13 July, according to the Charities Commission news update. The Bill will now pass (after the summer recess) to the Report Stage where further amendments can be considered before the Bill concludes its passage through the Commons with its Third Reading. If amendments are agreed by both Houses the Bill will be given Royal Assent and become an Act by the end of 2006. The [latest version of the Bill \(printed 13 July 2006\), Explanatory notes, Amendments and Standing Committee proceedings](#) is available at the United Kingdom Parliament website.

INDIA—NATIONAL POLICY ON THE VOLUNTEER SERVICE – DRAFT 2006 FORMULATED

The National Policy on the Voluntary Service, draft of 2006, is now available at the web site of [CALEIDOSCOPE](#). According to the draft, the policy is designed to encourage, enable, and empower an independent, creative, and effective voluntary sector, with diversity in form and function, so it can contribute to the social, cultural, and economic advancement of the people of India. The formulation of the policy is the beginning of a process to evolve a new working relationship between Government and the Voluntary Sector, without affecting the autonomy and identity of VOs.

KENYA—SESSIONAL POLICY PAPER ON NGOS ADOPTED BY KENYAN PARLIAMENT [Sessional Policy Paper No. 1 of 2006 on Non-Governmental Organizations](#) was adopted by the Kenyan Parliament on 13 July 2006. The NGO Policy Paper had been in development since 2001, and was submitted to the Parliament in late 2005. The NGO Council was involved in years past, but had not reviewed or commented in 2005 prior to the paper’s submission. The NGO Council Executive Committee will review the Policy Paper immediately and issue a statement in this regard. They are currently



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in consultations with [ICCSL](#) as to international best practices with regard to regulation and self-regulation of the NGO sector.

NORTHERN IRELAND—PROPOSED CHARITY LAW RELEASED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

New proposals to tighten the regulation of Northern Ireland's charities and stop paramilitaries and criminal gangs ripping off the public were issued for consultation, according to a news article published by [eGOV MONITOR](#) on 18 July 2006. The consultation period will run for twelve weeks before legislation is brought to the Parliament in late autumn. The proposals include provision for a new Charities Commission with the power to investigate misconduct and the mismanagement of charities and take remedial action. The Commission will be responsible to establish and maintain an accurate and up-to-date register of charities. The proposals also contain new arrangements to control public collections through a system of licenses/permits. Anyone wanting to collect money or goods would have to obtain such a license/permit.

TURKEY—PARLIAMENT TO CONSIDER NEW LAW ON FOUNDATIONS IN SEPTEMBER

The new Law on Foundations is under deliberation in Turkish Parliament. According to a news article published by [FORUM 18 NEWS SERVICE](#) on 26 July 2006, the Parliament is reported to reconvene in September to consider the proposed law. The proposed Law would regulate how "community foundations" – the organizations allowed by some non-Muslim ethnic/religious communities to own and recover property. Under the new proposed law, community foundations will be [able to purchase new property](#) for religious, social, cultural, and educational functions, as well as for providing health services by the permission of the Office of Foundations under more flexible conditions. Further information on issues with respect to religious freedom in Turkey is available in the [July 2006 issue of IJCSL](#).

UNITED STATES—OHIO AG PROPOSES NEW RULES FOR CHARITABLE GROUPS

The Ohio [Attorney General, Jim Petro](#), has proposed new state [rules for charitable groups](#), including hospitals, according to an Ohio government [press release](#) on 29 June 2006. If adopted, the regulations would require Ohio's nonprofit hospitals for the first time to file annual reports with the attorney general's office. Before these rules are submitted for filing on August 31, 2006 with the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review ("JCARR"), a public comment period will run from June 30 to August 21, 2006.

VENEZUELA—DRAFT NGO LAW PASSES FIRST READING IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Venezuela's National Assembly has drafted a bill that would block foreign donations to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and put such groups under state control. A news article published by [THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION](#) on 7 July 2006 calls the bill "draconian," but the government of Venezuela claims that it must be enacted in order to avoid foreign money being introduced into the country to subvert



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the legal system. The draft International Cooperation Law (also known as the NGO Law) has [passed](#) its first reading in the Venezuelan National Assembly (AN).

VIET NAM—NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER ASSOCIATIONS LAW IN OCTOBER SESSION

After contentious debates in the June session, the [National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam has agreed to give final consideration to the Associations Law in the October session](#). The current draft has been debated by all parties, some of whom have even developed and presented an alternative draft. Issues that remain to be resolved include coverage of the legislation and whether a pre-approval process will always be necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

UZBEKISTAN—ANOTHER US NGO CLOSED DOWN

On 12 July 2006, a Tashkent court ordered the closure of another U.S.-based nongovernmental organization- [The Urban Institute](#), according to the news article published by [RFE/RL](#). It is alleged the Urban Institute was engaged in activities outside its stated purpose.

ZIMBABWE—GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES SUPERNATURAL POWERS EXIST

Acknowledging that supernatural powers exist, the government of Zimbabwe has lifted a ban on the practice of witchcraft, repealing legislation dating back to colonial rule, according to a news article published by [BBC NEWS](#) on 2 July 2006. In 1899, colonial settlers made it a crime to accuse someone of being a witch or wizard. The bar, however, is lifted but use of magic to cause someone harm is still prohibited.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

JORDAN—EC CALLS FOR PROPOSALS FOR SMALL-SCALE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

The European Commission (EC) Delegation to Jordan has launched a call for proposals for micro-projects in the fields of democratization and human rights, according to a news article published by [JORDAN NEWS AGENCY](#) on 20 July 2006. The general objective of the micro-projects program is to provide small-scale financial support for local initiatives designed to promote human rights, the rule of law, democracy and conflict.

GLOBAL—

- **ACN RELEASES 2006 REPORT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE WORLD**

Aid to the Church in Need has presented its 8th annual report on religious freedom entitled “Report 2006 on Religious Freedom in the world,” according to a news article published by [THE CHRISTIAN POST](#) on 1 July 2006. The annual report gives a country-by-country analysis, based on direct information, official documents and



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articles from news agencies, newspapers, and magazines as well as information provided by various human rights organizations. The [English summary of the report](#) is available on ACN website.

- **UNHRC APPROVES UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

After more than two decades of work, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) approved the [Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), according to a news article published by [UN NEWS CENTRE](#) on 29 June 2006. The Declaration will now be forwarded to the General Assembly's September session. If approved, the declaration would set a benchmark against which countries' treatment of tribal peoples can be judged. The Declaration is not legally binding. According to the UN estimates that there are some 370 million indigenous peoples living in different parts of the world.

RESOURCES

ARMENIA—NEW WEBSITE FOR VOLUNTEERING LAUNCHED

To facilitate the formation and development of volunteers, informing the public of voluntarism and creating favorable conditions for involving NGOs and citizens in voluntary activities, a new website www.volunteer.am has been designed by the "Professionals for Civil Society" NGO. This website has been created within the frameworks of a project titled "Improvement of the Legal Framework and Promotion of Volunteerism" financed by the Democracy Commission of the USA Embassy in Armenia.

CANADA—PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING INTRODUCED

Guelph's Neighbourhood Support Coalition and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's Tenant Participation System have introduced [participatory budgeting](#), which are the first North American experiments in such democratic processes in which city residents decide how to allocate part of a municipal or public budget. Participatory budgeting can be a strategic tool for transformative community development and progressive urban politics in North America. It changes public spending policies to deliver concrete improvements in people's lives, while simultaneously transforming how these policies are decided. Canada's initial participatory budgets suggest new ways to promote budget participation, and perhaps even to build the more democratic and participatory cities that many of us imagine.

ENGLAND AND WALES—CHARITY COMMISSION PUBLISHES GUIDANCE ON COLLABORATIVE WORKING AND MERGERS

Charity Commission has recently published a Guidance entitled "[Collaborative Working and Mergers](#)." The guidance highlights good practices and sets out principles on issues and factors that charities need to take into account when seeking



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to work collaboratively or to merge. It also identifies key stages and practical steps that are involved in the different options.

ENGLAND AND WALES—CHARITIES COMMISSION PUBLISHES ANNUAL REPORT

On 19 July 2006, the Charity Commission published its [annual report for 2005-06](#). According to the [GOVERNMENT NEWS NETWORK](#), the report reflects how the Charity Commission's new strategy is resulting in more intelligent regulation, an approach that will facilitate build public confidence in effective charities and help implementing the anticipated Charities Act.

ISTR—NEW INTEREST GROUP ON LEGAL ISSUES LAUNCHED AT BANGKOK MEETING

A new Interest Group has been developed under the auspices of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) to enable scholars and scholar-practitioners to have better access to information about legal developments in their countries and to share drafts and works in progress with like-minded individuals around the world. Prof. Karla Simon is coordinating the listserve for ISTR, and anyone who would like to be included should contact her on simon@law.edu.

MIDDLE EAST—ICNL CONFERENCE PAPERS INCLUDE VALUABLE INFORMATION ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

During a conference held in Beirut Lebanon on July 3-5, presenters and participants from the Arab World discussed issues related to the legal framework for civil society in the region. Documents from the conference, including background papers, etc. are available on the [ICNL website](#).

UNITED STATES—VOLUNTEERING IN AMERICA: STATE TRENDS AND RANKINGS 2002-2005

The [Corporation for National and Community Service in the United States](#) has recently produced a report on volunteering in the United States. The report entitled “[Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings 2002-2005](#)” is a powerful new tool to assist organizations in developing a strategy and setting goals to increase volunteering in their organization and build the national service and volunteer infrastructure in their states in the USA.



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