



IJCSL NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 5

APRIL 2007

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

BANGLADESH -- ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND ANTI-TERRORIST FINANCING REGIMES SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED, SAYS US REPORT

Bangladesh government's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing regimes should be strengthened to comply with international standards, notes a US report entitled "[2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes](#)" released by [International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs](#) in Washington. According to a news article published by [THE DAILY STAR](#), the report underscores that Bangladesh should criminalize terrorist finance legislation should provide for safe harbor provisions in order to protect reporting individuals, due diligence programs, and banker negligence accountability that would make individual bankers responsible under certain circumstances if their institutions launder money. The 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) is an annual report by the Department of State to Congress prepared in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act. Volume II covers money laundering and financial crimes.

BRAZIL -- ANTI-TERRORISM LAW DRAFTED

To deal with organized crime groups prevalent in its biggest cities, the government has drafted an anti-terrorism bill. According to a news article published by [INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE](#), the new law does not define terrorism but lists a series of crimes that "spread terror." Among the crimes listed in the new law are bomb or shooting attacks against seaports and airports, bus and train stations, airplanes, ships, and public transportation vehicles. The Justice Ministry is currently analyzing the draft before sending it to Congress next month.

CANADA -- PARLIAMENT SAYS "NO" TO EXTENDING ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

The [Parliament of Canada](#) refused to extend its controversial [anti-terrorism legislation](#), according to a news article posted by [MSNBC](#). The law was enacted after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US. The law allowed police to arrest people suspected of planning an imminent terrorist attack and hold them for three days without charges and provided for investigative hearings in which a judge can compel witnesses to testify about alleged terrorist activities. Neither provision was ever applied.

OSCE -- WORKSHOP TO DISCUSS INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO COUNTER TERRORISM HELD

International legal framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition as well as practical issues, challenges and potential solutions to effectively counter terrorism were discussed in a two-day OSCE expert workshop ended on 23 March 2007. According to [OSCE press release](#), more than 165 prosecutors, judges, judicial and other officials from 53 OSCE participating and Partner for Co-operation States participated in the workshop. The workshop was organized by the OSCE in



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partnership with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). More than 20 experts from international and regional bodies also took part. The UNODC demonstrated technical assistance tools including the "Mutual Legal Assistance Request Writing Tool" software. This was the third major OSCE-wide conference to enhance international co-operation against terrorism.

PHILIPPINES – ANTI TERRORISM BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

On March 6th Philippines President Gloria Arroyo [signed](#) a new anti-terror bill into law. According to a news article published by [THE PHILIPPINE STAR](#), Republic Act 9372, called the [Human Security Act of 2007](#), allows police to detain suspected terrorists for three days before handing them over to the “proper judicial authority” and includes rebellion among the crimes considered to constitute terrorism. Opposition lawmakers say the law could be used to crush legitimate protests against the government. The law will take effect two months after the May elections. [Special rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Council](#), Martin Scheinin, has said that this new anti-terrorism could breach human rights and should be amended or repealed. According to a news article published by [BLOOMBERG](#), the special rapporteur drew attention to the definition of terrorism in the Human Security Act, claiming that it is “overly broad” and that the legislation does not meet international standards on civil and political rights.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

MEXICO -- HOUSE PASSES CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ON THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Right to Information will soon become part of the [Mexican Constitution](#), according to a news article published by [MILENIO](#). With 425 votes in favor and one abstention, the plenary session of the lower house of Mexico's bicameral legislature has approved the proposed amendment, which reforms the relevant articles of the constitution to make the right of access to the public information a constitutionally mandated right.

UNITED KINGDOM -- PARLIAMENTARY MOTION ON PROPOSED NEW RESTRICTIONS TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT TABLED

An all-party coalition of MPs has tabled a motion urging the government to drop its plans to severely restrict the Freedom of Information Act. The motion refers to draft regulations which would make it substantially easier for authorities to refuse FOI requests on costs grounds. [Early Day Motion No. 845 Freedom of Information](#) is supported by 127 MPs as of 21 March 2007. The [Freedom of Information \(FOI\) Act 2000](#) became law in January 2005. It gives the public access to information held by government and other public bodies, as well as strengthening existing rights to environmental information. Currently a [FOI request can be refused](#) if the cost of dealing with it is more than £600 (USD 1177) for government departments and £450 (USD 882) for other public authorities.



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UNITED STATES --

- **BILL TO PROMOTE OPEN GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED IN THE US SENATE**
[S. 849](#) – a bill to promote accessibility, accountability, and openness in government by strengthening the Freedom of Information Act has been introduced in US Senate on 13 March 2007. As chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Leahy held a [hearing](#) on S. 849 on 14 March, entitled "Open Government: Reinvigorating the Freedom of Information Act." This bill is in the first step in the legislative process. Introduced bills go first to committees that deliberate, investigate, and revise bills before they go to general debate.
- **HOUSE APPROVES NEW LEGISLATION RESTORING "PRESUMPTION OF DISCLOSURE"**
The United States House of Representative has approved new legislation restoring a "presumption of disclosure" standard that would commit agencies to releasing requested information unless there is a finding that such a disclosure could do harm, according to a news article posted by [FOX NEWS](#) on 6 March 2007. The bill [H.R. 1309](#) ensures that agencies abide by the 20-day deadline for responding to FOIA requests. It would create a FOIA ombudsman to help requesters resolve problems without resorting to litigation.
- **SUNSHINE WEEK SHOWS SUBSTANTIAL UNDERPERFORMANCE ON NATIONWIDE FOI REQUESTS**
[According to Development Gateway Foundation](#), during Sunshine Week (March 12-19) volunteers throughout the nation asked local municipalities a simple question — "What is the community's Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan?" The plan, which every municipality is required to have, was mandated by the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act in 1986. Yet many of those volunteers looking for the information were denied access -- out of 404 audits in 37 states and Puerto Rico, 177 requests were filled. Forty-four percent of those asking for the information received it. Twenty percent received partial information, and more than a third — 36 percent — were denied the information. Many municipalities cited terrorism as a prime reason for not releasing the information.
- **FOIA REQUEST REVEALS THAT 1.1 MILLION FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM PUBLIC VIEW SINCE 2001**
[According to the Associated Press](#), more than 1 million pages of historical government documents — a stack taller than the U.S. Capitol — have been removed from public view since the September 2001 terror attacks. In some cases, entire file boxes were removed without significant review. "We just felt we couldn't take the time and didn't always have the expertise," said Steve Tilley of the National Archives and Records Administration, who oversaw the program. The records administration began removing materials under its "records of concern" program, launched in November 2001 after the Justice



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Department instructed agencies to be more guarded in releasing government papers. The pulled records include presumably dangerous material, such as nearly half an enormous database from the Federal Emergency Management Agency with information about all federal facilities. But they also include presumably useless documents, such as part of a collection about the Lower Colorado River Authority that includes 114-year-old papers.

FISCAL MATTERS

CANADA -- BUDGET 2007 BRINGS CHANGES FOR CHARITIES

There are various provisions in [Budget 2007](#) that relate to Canadian charities, according to a [Canadian Council of Christian Charities \(CCCC\) news release](#). Under the 2007 budget document released on 19 March, corporations will be entitled to receive an additional charitable donation deduction for gifts of medicine from inventory under certain conditions. As of Budget 2006, when a donor donated publicly-listed securities to public foundations and/or charitable organizations, they no longer had to pay tax on the increase in value of those shares (i.e. the 'capital gain'). As of Budget 2007, this exemption is now extended to private foundations as well. Some of the 'non-qualifying securities' rules that deal with donations of securities (publicly listed and private) where the donor does not deal with the charity at arm's length will also be amended.

CHINA -- DRAFT CORPORATE INCOME TAX LAW REVISED TO INCREASE DEDUCTIONS FOR DONATIONS TO PUBLIC WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

The highest legislative body of China has revised the draft corporate income tax law. According to a news article published by [XINHUA](#), one revision is to raise the proportion of a company's charitable donation deduction against its annual profits that can be exempted from tax from the original 10 percent to 12 percent. Prior to revision, the deduction allowable had been 3 percent. The measure will encourage more companies to make donations to public welfare organizations. The revised bill will soon be submitted for approval.

UNITED KINGDOM --

- **CHARITY COMMISSION ANNOUNCES CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PUBLIC BENEFIT GUIDANCE**

The [Charity Commission](#) has launched a [consultation on draft public benefit guidance](#), according to the Commission's [news update](#). The draft guidance explains what the public benefit requirement means and sets out some proposals on how the Commission thinks charity trustees should report on their charity's public benefit. The Charity Commission chairman, Dame Suzi Leather, wrote in the Guardian, "For the first time in 400 years of charity legislation, the law will explicitly require those charities that advance education, religion or relieve poverty to demonstrate that they deliver public



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benefit.” [According to LifeSite](#), Dame Leather said that “for completely closed religious communities, it will be very difficult for them to retain charitable status.” Fr. Tim Finigan, head of the Association of Priests for the Gospel of Life wrote that the regulations are just the next step in the “implacable secularist agenda of modern Britain.” The consultation period ends in June 2007.

- **CHARITY COMMISSION RELEASES ANALYSIS OF THE LAW UNDERPINNING CHARITIES AND PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The [Charity commission](#) has released an [analysis of the law underpinning Charities and Public Benefit](#), according to Commission’s news update of March 2007. This legal analysis needs to be read together with the [Consultation on Draft Public Benefit Guidance](#) (see above).. The analysis explains the legal underpinning for the principles of public benefit set out in the draft guidance.

UNITED STATES --

- **OPM RULES DRAWS WIDE PROTEST**

The decision of the [US Office of Personnel Management](#), which administers the [Combined Federal Campaign](#) conducted in government offices, to drop a requirement that charities spend no more than 25 percent of their revenue on fund-raising and other overhead expenses has drawn wide criticism, according to the [CANTON REPOSITORY](#). Under the old rule, any organization that exceeded the 25-percent limit could participate only if it could explain why such expenses were reasonable and submit a formal plan to reduce them. The critics allege the [measure potentially undermine the CFC](#) and discourages charitable giving by federal employees. Senator Grassley said in [a letter to President Bush](#) that “OPM is sending exactly the opposite message — that there is no need for charities to be accountable to the public trust that comes with receiving charitable donations.” James S. Green, associate general counsel at the OPM, said the charity campaign will continue to calculate overhead rates and publish the information so that federal employees can determine for themselves whether a charity has reasonable administrative and fund-raising expenses.

- **GEORGIA BOARD OF EDUCATION MOVES TO MAKE BIBLE A MAIN TEXT IN ITS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Georgia is ready to introduce two literature classes on the Bible in public schools next year. According to a news article published by [FINDLAW](#), this will be the first instance in the United States to take an explicit stance endorsing - and funding - biblical teachings in public schools. On the list of classes approved by the Georgia Board of Education are Literature and History of the Old Testament Era, and Literature and History of the New Testament Era. After a 30-day public comment period the board is expected to give final approval



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FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

AZERBAIJAN – ODIHR MEETING FOCUSED ON FREEDOMS OF ASSOCIATION, ASSEMBLY, AND EXPRESSION

[According to News AZ](#), on March 29-30, the ODIHR Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in Almaty focused on challenges and opportunities with respect to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression and the role of the media in the OSCE. Representatives from the OSCE participating States, OSCE Institutions, and OSCE field operations, representatives of international governmental organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations, including a number of Azeri NGOs, and other civil society actors participated in the meeting.

EUROPE -- FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING REMAIN MARGINAL IN MAJOR EUROPEAN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

The social rating agency [Vigeo](#) has recently presented the results of a study on the respect for the freedom of association and the promotion of collective bargaining by major European multinational companies operating in different sectors, according to a news article published by [UNION NETWORK INTERNATIONAL](#). The rating agency's analysis shows that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining remain marginal in the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility objectives.

GHANA – COURT ENJOINS PROCESSIONS FOR TWO WEEKS AROUND 50TH ANNIVERSARY

[According to Graphic Ghana](#), the Accra Fast Track High Court restrained the Committee for Joint Action (CJA), or any other organization, from going on a procession between March 5 and 15, 2007 in celebration of Ghana's 50th Independence anniversary. It said because of the anniversary, a number of Heads of State, VIPs, and other visitors would join Ghanaians to celebrate the occasion and for that reason almost every policeman had been assigned a special duty before and after March 6, 2007 throughout the country. Consequently, that had made it impossible to organize officers and men to provide the needed security for those who intended to go on the procession. It said although the organizers had insisted on holding the procession, their own safety, as well as that of members of the public, could not be guaranteed, and that unless restrained from doing so, the procession could create an ungovernable situation which was likely to lead to disorder and insecurity.

KAZAKHSTAN -- CURRENT LEGISLATION DOES NOT PROMOTE ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, SAYS MONITORING REPORTS

Current legislation in Kazakhstan and its implementation by governmental bodies does not promote enabling conditions for freedom of assembly, according to a report entitled "On results of freedom of assembly monitoring in the Republic of



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Kazakhstan." According to a news article published by [KAZAKHSTAN TODAY](#), the report heavily criticizes the actions of executive and legislative branches, law machinery, and courts, and, in particular, police and local executive bodies. The reports are the result of the monitoring held by the Kazakhstani NGO "Charter for Human Rights" and supported by the OSCE Centre in Almaty together with ODIHR. The monitoring was conducted from 1 November to 31 July 2006 in Astana, Almaty, Karaganda, Shymkent.

KYRGYZSTAN -- CALL FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF MASSIVE RALLIES TO CHANGE CONSTITUTION

A new opposition group in Kyrgyzstan – the United Front For A Worthy Future For Kyrgyzstan – is calling for massive rallies across the country in April to protest against the government and demand that it make several constitutional changes, according to a news article published by [RFE/RL](#) on 14 March 2007. The United Front is led by former Prime Minister Feliks Kulov, who created it in February, shortly after parliament rejected his candidacy for the post of prime minister twice and President Kurmanbek Bakiev dropped him as a nominee. The For Reforms movement is also calling for April demonstrations to demand constitutional reforms. Last year it organized the largest rally ever in Bishkek in November – numbering more than 20,000 people at times – with the goal of forcing the government to accept constitutional reforms. The rally lasted one week and appeared to work as on November 8 parliament passed a new constitution after two quick readings. Bakiev signed it the next day. That constitution reduced the powers of the president but, at the end of last year, pro-presidential legislators passed a package of amendments to the constitution that restored much of the power the president had lost in the previous changes. Now For Reforms wants the Kyrgyz people to come out again and force the president to accept the terms of the first changes to the constitution.

OSCE – HOLDS CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION, AND EXPRESSION

The two-day conference addressing issues of freedom of assembly, association and expression, brought together some 200 human rights activists, state officials, and journalists in Vienna from 29 – 30 March 2007. According to [OSCE press release](#), the aim of the meeting was to identify the challenges faced by governments throughout the OSCE region in ensuring that all citizens have an equal opportunity to express their opinions and interests, and to focus on ways to overcome obstacles to the implementation of these rights.

RUSSIA -- WILL SALVATION ARMY'S RIGHTS BE RESTORED?

Although the Russian government seems set to pay the Moscow branch of the Salvation Army the compensation due to it by 5 April in the wake of the October 2006 judgment at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), the branch's lawyer told [Forum 18 News Service](#) that the government has taken no steps to re-register the branch or to renounce official denigration of the group as a "paramilitary organization". "If they'd wanted to sort this out, they would have done so already. They had five years while our [ECHR] application was pending." The official in



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charge of registration of religious organizations within the Federal Registration Service, Viktor Korolev, told Forum 18 he has yet to read the ECHR's judgment and has received no instructions from the Russian Council of Ministers.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – PROPOSED LABOR LAW DOES NOT MEET INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, SAYS HRW REPORT

A proposed labor law in the United Arab Emirates falls short of international standards for workers' rights, according to Human Rights Watch [press release](#) on 25 March 2007. The HRW says in its [report](#) that the draft law published by the UAE Labor Ministry should be revised to protect workers' rights to freedom of association, such as the right to organize, bargain collectively and conduct a strike. The [Ministry has welcomed the stakeholders' views and input](#) on the [draft labor law](#). The Ministry has invited [feedback and public comments](#) on the draft law. The revised version then will be submitted to legislative and executive authorities in the UAE, including the Federal National Council.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

ARMENIA – YEREVAN MEDIA ADOPTS CODE OF ETHICS

Members of the Yerevan media have adopted a Code of Ethics that calls for press and broadcast outlets to publish or air legitimate complaints about their journalism. According to a news article published by [ARMENIANOW](#), the code was agreed upon on 10 March 2007 by 21 media, 8 journalism organizations and free lance journalists. The Mass Media Self-Regulation initiative also founded an observer body to discuss appeals and infringements of the code.

CHINA -- A NEW INTERNET PUBLISHING LAW UNDER CONSIDERATION

The government is drafting a law to bring blogs and web casts under Internet publication regulations, according to a news article published by [JURNALO](#). China's General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP) together with several other departments, is working on the new rules. The officials, however, did not give the timeframe as to when the rules would be announced and enforced. A recent government report reveals that China had an estimated 20.8 million bloggers at the end of 2006, of whom 3.15 million were active writers.

FRANCE -- NEW LAW BANS FILMING VIOLENCE

A new law in France makes it a crime for anyone who is not a professional journalist to film real-world violence and distribute the images on the Internet, according to a news article published by [NEWS 24](#). Violators will be subject to up to five years in prison under the new measure. Critics say the law has the undesirable side effect of trampling freedom of expression.

INDONESIA – PROSECUTORS ASK TWO YEARS IN JAIL FOR EDITOR OF PLAYBOY INDONESIA FOR VIOLATING ANTI-INDECENCY LAWS.



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Government prosecutors on Tuesday demanded two years in jail for the editor of the Playboy Indonesia magazine for violating anti-indecency laws by publishing "porn" pictures in the magazine, according to a news article published by [MAIL & GUARDIAN](#). Hundreds of Muslim hardliners said two years was not enough, with some demanding that he be sentenced to death, even though the maximum sentence for the anti-indecency law is two years and eight months. The magazine has been criticized even by some who acknowledge that it is no more pornographic than many local tabloids, which tend to feature more-explicit photos and stories. Pornographic videos, though illegal, are sold more or less openly at stores across the country.

KAZAKHSTAN – CULTURE MINISTER EJECTS TV JOURNALIST FROM PRESS CONFERENCE

Kazakh Information and Culture Minister, Yermukhammet Ertisbaev, demanded that the journalists from the independent television station Era leave a press conference. According to a news article published by [RFE/RL](#), the incident, which was filmed and shown by Era TV and television station Channel 31, provoked a response that included criticism from the head of Kazakhstan's Union of Journalists. The Union and [Adil Soz Foundation](#) has jointly written an open letter to Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbaev, demanding that the Culture Minister be dismissed from his post. "Era TV" and journalist, Julia Isakova, [have filed a claim](#) for protection of honor and dignity to Minister of Culture and Information Yermukhammet Yertysbaev in Almaty Regional Court of Astana.

PHaic TĂN – JOURNALISTS DETAINED AND NEWSPAPER SHUT DOWN

In the capital city of Bumpattabumpah, the country's second-largest circulation daily newspaper has been shut down and two journalists and a photographer detained after the publication of an unflattering photograph of the country's [Queen Suahm Luprang](#). The Queen of [Phaic Tăn](#) is extremely conscious about her weight, and the photograph might have led some of her beloved subjects to think that she has a double chin. A protest about the detention of the journalists has been launched to FOPN (Federation of Opium Producing Nations) the only international body of which Phaic Tăn is a member, by Aid Aid, a foreign NGO that delivers democracy assistance to the country (and manages principally to support its ex-pat staff in the process).

POLAND – GOVERNMENT PROPOSES LAW BANNING DISCUSSION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Government is considering a proposal to outlaw discussion of homosexuality in schools and educational institutions across the country, according to a news article published by [EUOBSERVER](#). Under the draft proposal, teachers may be fired, fined, or imprisoned if they violate the rules. Openly gay teachers may also lose their jobs. If the bill is officially submitted to the Polish lower house, the European Parliament's committee on civil liberties has vowed to launch a study into the compatibility of such legislation with EU rules. [Human Rights Watch](#) said in its letter to the Polish Prime Minister that any such ban would violate freedom of speech and impede free access to information.



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QATAR – JOURNALISTS TO DRAFT NEW PRESS LAW

A group of Qatari journalists is preparing a draft of a new press law which is likely to be considered soon. According to a news article published by [THE PENINSULA](#), the draft will include basic principles enshrined in the national constitution and local legislation, international press law, the convention on human rights, and other related UN conventions relating to the right to free thought and expression. The draft under preparation will permit journalists to set up professional associations.

RUSSIA–

- **DECREE CREATING NEW AGENCY TO REGULATE MEDIA AND INTERNET PASSED**

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has decreed the creation of an agency to regulate the media and the Internet, according to a news article published by [INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE](#). The decree amalgamates two existing agencies into one that will license broadcasters, newspapers, and Web sites and oversee their editorial content. The decree has raised serious press freedom worries amongst Russia's top journalists. They claim the establishment of new regulating body will put electronic media as well as personal data about people such as bloggers under control. The new regulating body will start work within three months. In the opinion of some experts, [according to RFE/RL](#), the primary issue Russian officials are currently concerned about is the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. Digital television, which uses smaller channel bandwidth, would create more space for niche television channels and other services, rendering almost impossible the task of controlling broadcasts.

- **BILL BANNING DISCLOSURE OF ETHNICITY AND RELIGION OF OFFENDERS AND THOSE AFFECTED BY CRIMES SUBMITTED TO THE STATE DUMA**

A bill a banning the distribution of information about the ethnicity, race, and religion of offenders, suspected criminals, and people who suffer from crimes through the mass media and computer networks has been submitted to the State Duma, according to a news article published by [INTERFAX](#). Under the bill, mentioning a person's ethnicity during media coverage of the activities of law enforcement agencies without sufficient grounds can be regarded as inaccurate information and a violation of citizens' constitutional rights.

SYRIA – NEW MEDIA STRATEGY PROPOSED

Syria is planning to develop its media strategy to counter the campaign launched against Damascus by some Western media outlets.. According to a news article published by [MIDDAST ONLINE](#), Syrian Radio and Television Cooperation, which was formed in 1951, is proposing an act that would empower the Cooperation with more financial and administrative independence to enable it to compete with other Arab and international media outlets. Salwa Sabri, director of programs at the Syrian Satellite



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Channel, said new political, social, economical and family programs are set to be broadcasted according to the new plan, which would monitor and make sure such programs are upgraded regularly to meet international demands and local needs. Sabri added that there would be a new program that would follow the daily hardships faced by Syrian living under Israeli occupation of Golan Heights. Sabri concluded that the new strategy would not only counter other media's misrepresentation of Syria, but also help unite Syrians, regardless of their backgrounds.

TURKEY – YOUTUBE ACCESS SHUT DOWN AFTER VIDEO THAT INSULTED ATATURK

Turkey's largest internet services provider shut down access to the [YouTube](#) video-sharing web site on Wednesday after a court ruling that some of its content insulted Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, according to a news article published by [FINANCIAL TIMES](#) on 13 March 2007. The decision followed days of furious insult-sharing among Turkish and Greek users of the popular and controversial site. The result was a flood of complaints to the site and to the media from Turkish users angered by what one newspaper said were "fanatic Greeks broadcasting videos insulting Ataturk." Turk Telekom acted first by removing the offending items, but a court ordered access to the site to be blocked late on Tuesday after prosecutors brought a case against YouTube.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

CANADA – MUSLIM FACE-VEIL BANNED IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN QUEBEC

Muslim women will have to remove their face coverings ([niqab](#)) if they want to vote in upcoming elections in Quebec. According to a news article published by [ABC NEWS](#), relevant articles to electoral laws were modified to add "any person showing up at a polling station must be uncovered to exercise the right to vote." Condemning the move, several Muslims groups said rule modification could turn their members away from the polls.

GERMANY – JUDGE CITES KORAN IN DENYING QUICK DIVORCE

According to a news article published by [THE NEW YORK TIMES](#), a German judge turned down a German Muslim woman's request for a speedy divorce on the ground that her husband beat her. In her ruling, the judge, Christa Datz-Winter, noted that the couple came from a Moroccan cultural milieu, in which it is common for husbands to beat their wives. The Koran, she wrote in her decision, sanctions such physical abuse. Politicians and Muslim leaders in Germany have expressed outrage at the remarks of the judge. The court in Frankfurt removed Judge Datz-Winter from the case, saying it could not justify her reasoning. In a statement defending her ruling, Judge Datz-Winter noted that she had ordered the man to move out and put a restraining order on him. But she also cited the verse in the Koran that speaks of a husband's prerogatives in disciplining his wife. And she suggested that the wife's Western lifestyle would give her husband grounds to claim his honor had been compromised.



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IRAQ – ISLAMIC MILITIA ORDERS NON-MUSLIMS TO PAY TAX

Islamic militias in Baghdad and Mosul ordered Christians to pay the “[Jizya](#), a poll tax that dates back to the period of the Ottoman Empire, which guaranteed non Muslims the right to practice their religion as well as Muslim protection. According to a news article published by [ASIA NEWS](#), the groups are ordered “not to reveal their activities” to Iraqi authorities. All Jizya contributions are given in alms to the Mosques

ISRAEL–BILL TO OUTLAW MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES PROPOSED

The Sephardic [Shas](#) party (*Shomrei Torah Sephardim*-Sephardi Torah Guardians), which has 17 seats in the Knesset, has proposed a bill that would jail missionaries who proselytize to individuals in Israel, according to a news article published by [ARUTZ SHEVA](#). The proposal came after a record number of Jews converted to Islam last year. The existing law mandates six months’ imprisonment for those who attempt to persuade Israeli minors to leave their faith or who perform a conversion ceremony on the children and teens. It does not, however, outlaw proselytizing adults, a deficiency that would be corrected by the new law.

JORDAN – PARLIAMENT ENDORSED NEW PRESS LAW IMPOSING HEAVY FINES AND IMPRISONMENT FOR RELIGIOUS DEFAMATION

[Jordanian lawmakers](#) have approved controversial press and publication legislation that would impose heavy fines and prison terms on journalists for slander and religious defamation, according to a news article posted by [THE JERUSALEM POST](#). Under the new law, journalists can be convicted of defaming religions protected under the constitution or offending religious prophets in writing or in drawings. They also can be found guilty if their writings are viewed as an insult to religious sentiments or incite sectarian strife and racism. Jordanian journalists and other [stakeholders have expressed serious concerns](#), claiming the new legislation is a setback in freedoms that will adversely affect the country's reform process. The new legislation is, however, reported to be less restrictive than the current law.

MOLDOVA – ECHR FINES GOVERNMENT FOR DENYING LEGAL STATUS TO MOLDOVAN TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH

On 27 February the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ordered the government to pay compensation of 12,000 Euros (USD 15,827) to the Moldovan True Orthodox Church after the State Service for Religious Denominations refused to register it despite repeated court orders to do so, according to a news article published by [FORUM 18 NEWS SERVICE](#). This is the second instance where ECHR has fined the Moldovan government for refusing with no good reason to grant legal status to the local religious community. Earlier the government was fined for denying legal status to the Bessarabian Orthodox Church.

PAKISTAN – HINDU JUDGE SWORN IN AS ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE OF PAKISTAN

Justice Rana Bhagwandas, the senior most judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, took charge as the acting Chief Justice of Pakistan, becoming the first ever Hindu to assume the top post in country’s apex court according to a news article published by



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[DAWN](#). The appointment has triggered a debate after the Muslim religious lobby in Pakistan started questioning if a non-Muslim can become the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The former judges of the Supreme Court, however, believe that Constitution did not bar a non-Muslim from becoming the country's chief justice.

RWANDA – STREET PREACHERS ARRESTED AND DETAINED

The Police have captured street preachers around Kigali city. The police personnel mounted the operations in three districts of Kigali city, Nyarugenge, and Gasabo in which numerous preachers were arrested and detained. According to a news article published by [THE NEW TIMES](#), the police allege that the preachers have defied pleas from police to stop preaching on the streets and that their activities were attracting crowds, causing commotion, and creating unsafe conditions in the busy city centre. The preachers have flatly denied disobeying the police. The arrest and detention of street preachers around Kigali city has attracted bitter reactions from the public. Church leaders have angrily responded to the move describing it as an attack on the freedom of worship especially for the Christian fellowship.

TAJIKISTAN – AUTHORITIES LAUNCH CRACKDOWN ON UNREGISTERED MOSQUES

Authorities in Tajikistan's capital have begun a crackdown on dozens of unregistered mosques, fearing they could become a source of religious extremism, according to a news article posted by [INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE](#). Representative of the city prosecutor's office has notified that out of 148 unregistered mosques, thirteen will be demolished, 28 will be allowed to work after registering with authorities, and the rest will be closed down. Over 3,000 mosques function in Tajikistan, and up to 90 percent of them lack registration.

UNITED KINGDOM – SCHOOLS MAY BAN NIQAB

Schools in England will have the right to ban students from wearing Muslim face veils, according to a news article published by [REF/RL](#). This ban, however, will be subject to teachers' satisfaction that such veils affect safety, security, or a child's ability to learn. The government is expected to finalize new guidelines in the next few months. Muslim face veil ([niqab](#)) sparked debate in Britain after senior minister Jack Straw last year said they made community relations "more difficult."

UNITED STATES – CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT RULES THAT RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS MAY RECEIVE TAX FREE BONDS

On 5 March 2007, the [Supreme Court of California](#) ruled in the case of [California Statewide Communities Development Authority v. All Persons Interested in the Matter of the Validity of a Purchase Agreement](#) that the state may issue tax-exempt government bonds to help religious schools pay for improvements, even if the schools are "pervasively sectarian." The bonds, however, can be used only to build facilities if the religious schools offer a broad curriculum in secular subjects and provide classes that are "neutral with respect to religion." According to a news article published by [LOS ANGELES TIMES](#), the private religious schools will now be able to save millions of dollars in building new facilities. By using the government bonds, the schools will be able to borrow money at a lower interest rate and thereby reduce



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their costs. The state government, however, loses tax revenue because the interest paid to the bondholders is not subject to state income taxes. Critics complained that the tax-free municipal bonds violated separation of church and state.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

JAPAN – NEW CHARITY COMMISSION INAUGURATED

The new Charitable Status Recognition Committee, which is the Japanese version of the Charity Commission for England and Wales, inaugurated its start-up operations with official appointment of [seven committee members](#) as from April 1st 2007. Prior to the new Charity Laws' going into effect in 2008, this committee/commission will work on the development of regulations that will ensure the appropriate implementation of the new Charity Laws. Articles describing the new legislation and its history are available in the [October 2006 issue of the International Journal of Civil Society Law](#).

SLOVAKIA – CABINET AGREES TO AMEND CHURCH REGISTRATION RULES

The cabinet has agreed to amend the Act on Church Registration. According to a news article published by [THE SLOVAK SPECTATOR](#), the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and deputy of the opposition Hungarian Coalition Party has opposed the revision of the Act pointing out that the current Act may be at odds with the [Constitution](#), Article 24 of which guarantees that churches and religious communities constitute their own bodies, inaugurate their clergymen, organize the teaching of religion, and establish religious orders and other church institutions independently of state bodies, a right that can be limited only can be limited by law, "if such a measure is unavoidable in a democratic society to protect public order, health, morality, or the rights and liberties of others." The proposed revision of the Act tightens the rules of church registration even further.

UNITED KINGDOM –

- **CHARITY COMMISSION RELEASES SUMMARY OF THE CHARITIES ACT 2006 PROVISIONS**

The [Charity Commission](#) has put together a summary of the Charities Act 2006 provisions effective from 27 February, with links through to updated operational guidance and publications, according to charity commission's [news update](#). The [Summary of updated operational guidance and publications](#) is now available on Commission's website.

- **NEW THRESHOLD FOR CHARITIES REGISTRATION**

From 23 April 2007 charities will only have to be registered with the Charity Commission if their annual income is over £5,000 (USD 9,807). According to a [Commission's news update](#), the new threshold is introduced by regulations made under the Charities Act 2006, which will also do away with the



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requirement to [register for charities](#) that own land or property that is permanent endowment. Charities that already do not have to register because they are exempted by law are not affected.

- **HUNDREDS OF CHARITIES UNDERTAKE TO COMPLY WITH CODE OF PRACTICE**

More than two hundred charities have signed up to the Fundraising Standards Board (FSB) to declare their compliance with a demanding code of practice, according to a [news article](#) published by [CAF](#). The FSB was launched on 12 February 2007 and aims to boost the public's confidence in charities. It was set up by a sector-wide steering group, chaired by CAF, following the Buse Commission's proposals in 2004.

- **A NEW REPORT CALLS FOR RECLASSIFICATION OF CHARITIES**

A new report entitled "[Who Cares? How State Funding and Political Activism Change Charity](#)," published by [CIVITAS](#) says that charities which derive more than 70% of their income from the state should be reclassified as statutory agencies, according to an [article](#) published by [March edition of CAF News](#). Those receiving less than 30% of their income from the state would keep their charitable status; those receiving between 30% and 70% would be known as state-funded charities. The report has met strong opposition since its recent publication. If the proposed changes are implemented, the sector could see some of its biggest names losing their charitable status, and their right to tax breaks on charitable donations.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

EGYPT –

- **FIRST BATCH OF WOMEN JUDGES APPOINTED**

On 14 March 2007, the Supreme Judicial Council approved the appointment of 31 female judges for the position of judge or chief justice, according to a news article published by [AL-AHRAM WEEKLY](#). Women's rights advocates have hailed the appointments, but others said the announcement still falls short of providing women equal opportunities. The decree of Council comes [despite ongoing resistance](#) from the nation's conservative Muslims who had argued to exclude women from the bench on the grounds that they would have to spend time alone with men.

- **DEMOCRACY TAKES A BATTERING IN A CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM**

The Egyptian voters in a national referendum approved the amendments of 34 sections of the [Egyptian Constitution](#), according to a news article published by [MIDDLE EAST TIMES](#) on 27 March 2007. Amid accusations of ballot-rigging, turnout was just 27%. The amendments restrict judicial supervision of elections. The amendment of Article 179 annuls the emergency law under



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which President Mubarak has ruled for 25 years, but it is also intended to support an upcoming "law against terrorism" which would allow the authorities to arrest suspects, search homes, read mail and tap phones without a warrant. It would also allow the trial of civilians by military courts in cases of alleged terrorism. Article 5 will now ban the formation of any party not only "based on religion," but even "with a religious reference point" (marja'iyah), which will prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from forming a political party. In addition, constitutional Articles 62 and 94 may eliminate the ability of the 88 Muslim Brotherhood members of parliament to enter legislative elections as independents. [Amnesty International](#) has called the changes the [greatest erosion of human rights](#) in 26 years. The referendum came on the heels of the regime's crackdown which resulted in forty members of the Brotherhood being brought before a military tribunal with charges that go beyond the standard accusation of membership in a banned organization. There are also accusations of involvement in terrorism, money laundering, and forming paramilitary militias along the lines of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Hizbollah, and Hamas. The [Arab Reform Bulletin](#) of [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) has more.

IRAN – NEW LAW ON WOMEN ANNOUNCED

Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, has announced a new law on women's rights and responsibilities. He notified the Presidential Office's Center for Women's and Family Affairs about the new law during the first week of March. According to a news article published by [MEHAR NEWS](#), the law requires that the government clarify the rights and responsibilities of women in the national and international arenas based on the [Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), which states that women have a right to education to the highest level, the right to employment, the right to hold judicial posts "in accordance with law," but that women have the "right and responsibility to observe the Islamic codes of dress and the responsibility to observe chastity in society." The Charter was approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2004. The law, which is to be enacted in the framework of implementation of articles 20 and 21 of the [Constitution](#), was ratified by the Majlis and Guardian Council in February 2007.

RESOURCES

CHINA – NEW LISTSERVE ESTABLISHED; MATERIALS ON RECENT LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS MADE AVAILABLE

Through the resources of the Catholic University of America School of Law, a new listserv has been established. ChinaNPOLaw is an unmoderated listserv available to persons interested in civil society developments in China. ICCSL has posted a memorandum to the listserv describing recent developments affecting the legal and fiscal framework for NPOs in China. Persons interested in subscribing should send an email to LISTSERV@LISTS.CUA.EDU with the following in the body of the email:



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SUBSCRIBE CHINANPOLAW. If they experience any problems, they can email CSLHelp@law.edu and they will be manually added to the list. Anyone interested in receiving the recent memo should contact [Karla Simon](#).

EBRD – NEW GUIDE TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

The [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) has issued a new "[Guide to information requests](#)." The [One World Trust](#) participated in consultations with the EBRD in drafting the information disclosure procedures, which include timelines for request processing and how to appeal a denial of information.

EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA & NORTH AMERICA – IHF’S ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS RELEASED

On 27 March 2007, the [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights](#) (IHF), a federation of 46 independent human rights organizations, released its “Annual Report” on human rights developments in the participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the year 2006. The report entitled “[Human Rights in the OSCE Region: Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 2007](#)” is divided into two parts: Part I contains short overviews on human rights developments in 37 participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as articles on developments with regard to freedom of religion and Roma rights. Part II focuses on the IHF priority countries and regions in 2006: the North Caucasus, Central Asia and Belarus, and the IHF yearly campaign topic of counterterrorism measures and the absolute ban on torture. The aim of this report is to shed light on the OSCE governments’ compliance with their OSCE and other international human rights commitments particularly in the field of civil and political rights.

GLOBAL –

- **COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE OF LAWS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES PUBLISHED**

[Wadhwa and company](#) has released a [Comprehensive Guide of Laws of Human Rights in Commonwealth Countries](#), prepared by Bimal N. Patel. The Guide provides a comprehensive overview of 116 international and regional treaties and participation status of 53 members of [Commonwealth countries](#). According to the foreword, the book is a useful research and reference tool for policy-makers, judiciaries, academicians, researchers, students and civil society organizations to understand and appreciate the framework of human rights instruments presently applying within Commonwealth member countries.

- **UN PUBLISHES COUNTER-TERRORISM ONLINE HANDBOOK**

The United Nations has published the first handbook advising governments in various aspects of the fight against terrorism, according to a news article published by [TIMES OF INDIA](#). The handbook entitled “[Counter-Terrorism Online Handbook](#)” was developed to better assist governments to utilize



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resources to “enhance their own efforts at countering terrorism within the framework of the (anti-terror) global strategy.” It also discusses ways to assist victims of terrorist attacks, prevent travel by terrorists, provide training to law enforcement entities, assist with drafting of anti-terrorism legislation, defend human rights, and protect key infrastructure. The handbook is prepared with the assistance of the [counter-terrorism implementation task force](#), various UN departments and agencies, and the [International Criminal Police Organization \(Interpol\)](#).

- **THE US STATE DEPARTMENT RELEASES COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES FOR 2006**

On 6 March 2007, the US State Department released [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006](#), according to State Department [press release](#). These reports describe the performance of governments in putting into practice their international commitments on human rights and review each country's performance in 2006. For the first time, the 2006 reports include a section in each country's report regarding respect for freedom of speech on the Internet. Additionally, they have more coverage of the treatment of NGOs. There is no report on the United States.

NGO-IN-A-BOX PROJECT OFFERS TOOLKITS TO MEET THE SPECIALIZED TECHNOLOGY NEEDS OF NON-PROFITS

NGO-in-a-box project offers a series of toolkits, peer reviewed resources, and self-training materials designed to meet the specialized technology needs of non-profits. The Open Publishing Edition of [NGO-in-a-box](#) is a toolkit of free and open source software, tutorials and guides for producing, publishing and distributing content. According to a news article published by [DEVELOPMENT GATEWAY](#) on 1 March 2007, the edition was produced by Tactical Tech in collaboration with Commons and is aimed at small to medium sized non-profits, independent media organizations, free culture creators, and grassroots journalists with a particular emphasis on those in developing and transition countries. [NGO-in-a-Box Security Edition](#) is aimed predominantly at human rights, anti-corruption, and women's groups, independent media, and journalists. Its purpose is to help these groups, and those who work as trainers and technical support with these groups, to orient themselves with the kinds of security and protection tools they could use and the ability to easily access and try them out.

SERBIA – NEW BOOK ON THE FUTURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY PUBLISHED

The [Millennium Centre for Civil Society Development](#) has published a book entitled “[Future of Civil Society](#).” According to a news article published by [ONEWORLD SOUTHEAST EUROPE](#), the book is a compilation of speeches by assassinated Prime Minister Djindjic, in particular, his essays on conditions for a civil society. The book also includes essays by Vukasin Pavlovic from the Faculty of Political Sciences, Zoran Stojiljkovic, and Srecko Mihajlovic from the Social Sciences Institute. The book aims to promote discussion and the debate on civil society interrupted after the



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death of Zoran Djindjic. At the book-launch ceremony, the editor commented that the future of civil society in the country depends on the ability of the state to create the legal framework and political instruments that would provide for its unimpeded work.

UNITED KINGDOM – RESOURCE GUIDE TO LEGAL ISSUES FOR MANAGING VOLUNTEERS IS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The complete version of guide to legal issues for volunteer managers entitled “[Volunteers and the Law](#)” is now available online. “Volunteers and the Law” covers all the main areas of concern including Expenses, Benefits, Criminal record checks, Health and safety, Data protection, Avoiding creating employment contracts. The publication is the first of its kind dedicated to volunteering and is a valuable tool for large and small organizations.

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