



IJCSL NEWSLETTER

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JUNE 2007

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

KAZAKHSTAN—MAJLIS APPROVES AMENDMENTS TO ANTI-TERROR LAW

The [Majlis](#) (the lower house of the [Parliament](#)) has approved a draft law on amendments to the law “On fighting against terrorism.” According to a news article posted by [XIGNITE](#) on 25 April 2007, the draft introduces concepts such as “financing terrorism” and “terrorist organization,” and envisages setting up a national system for fighting against terrorism, it also specifies the jurisdiction of the president, the government, and of authorized state bodies in coordinating the anti-terror fight. It seeks expansion of a conceptual apparatus in line with recommendations on the unification and harmonization of the legislation of the [Collective Security Treaty Organization](#) (CSTO) member states as well as with the model laws “On fighting against terrorism” drafted by the CIS Inter-parliamentary Assembly. The draft law is currently in the [Senate](#) (upper house of the parliament) for further consideration

UNITED KINGDOM—GOVERNMENT DRAFTS TOUGHER ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

The government is drafting tougher anti-terrorism legislation that would allow police to stop and question people without suspecting a crime had taken place, according to a news article published by [GLOBAL NATIONAL](#) on 27 May 2007. Under current law, British police have the right to stop and search individuals on “reasonable grounds for suspicion” but have no right to ask for identity and recent movements.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

BAHRAIN—PARLIAMENT SESSIONS TO BE LIVE ON RADIO SOON

Members of the Parliament have voted in favor of the proposal to broadcast Parliamentary sessions live on radio, according to a news article published by [GULF DAILY NEWS](#) on 9 May 2007. The Ministry of Information will be advised to broadcast unedited live coverage of the sessions. Currently, the sessions of the Parliament are broadcast only after editing by ministry officials.

BULGARIA—INTERNATIONAL FOI ADVOCATES PROTEST DRAFT AMENDMENTS

A letter drafted by [Article 19](#) called on members of the Bulgarian National Assembly not to pass proposed amendments which the letter said would substantially weaken the national system for access to information. It was endorsed by 68 organizations and individuals from around the world, according to an Article 19 [press release](#) on 21 May 2007. The National Assembly approved the draft amendments to the [Access to Public Information Act](#) (APIA) after first reading on 10 May 2007. According to a [FREEDOMINFO.ORG press release](#), the proposed amendments require requesters to prove they have a legal interest in the information they are requesting, thus significantly altering the current system that grants access for any requester for any reason. The amendments would also extend the time for government offices to respond to requests, from 14 calendar days to 20 working days. Under the proposed



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amendments, public authorities would no longer be obliged to provide partial access to government records and would be able to charge “reasonable” fees, compared to the current law, which t says only the actual costs incurred in fulfilling a request may be charged.

CANADA—CONSTITUTION MUST BE CHANGED TO GUARANTEE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS, SAYS ONTARIO COURT OF APPEAL

[Judge Harry Laforme](#) of the [Ontario Court of Appeal](#) said in a decision issued 25 May 2007 that the Canadian Constitution must be amended to guarantee access to government documents. The ruling in [The Criminal Lawyers' Association v. Ontario \(Public Safety and Security\)](#) rewrites current law, which had prohibited [Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner](#) from determining whether the public interest outweighs the need for secrecy in matters involving police and solicitor-client privilege. Justice Harry Laforme wrote that it is incorrect to assume that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms forbids disclosure outright “simply because the framers rejected a constitutionally entrenched right to information.” The suit was filed by the [Criminal Lawyers' Association](#) in response to a refusal by the Ontario Ministry of Public Safety and Security to turn over government documents in a 1983 murder case.

CHINA—STATE COUNCIL APPROVES OPEN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION REGULATIONS

The State Council has issued a milestone regulation to boost official transparency by ordering government departments to be more open in reporting information. According to a news article published by the [CHINESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WEB PORTAL](#) on 24 April 2007, the “Ordinance on Openness of Government Information” requires government departments to give out information of interest to the public and to explain administrative procedures including “government purchases, budgets and expenses, results of investigations into environmental protection, public health and food and drug safety.” The decree, signed by Premier Wen Jiabao, is likely to become the country’s most specific and progressive set of rules encouraging the release of government information. The decree will take effect on 1 May 2008.

GLOBAL—REPORT RELEASED REVIEWING FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, STATE SECRETS AND PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS LAWS IN 56 OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

Privacy International (PI) has released a new report entitled “[Legal Protections and Barriers on the Right to Information, State Secrets and Protection of Sources in OSCE Participating States](#),” reviewing freedom of information, state secrets and protection of journalists sources laws in the 56 OSCE participating states. According to the IP press release on 2 May 2007, the report finds that while most OSCE countries have adopted freedom of information laws, there has been an increasing abuse of state secrets laws and illegal searches and wiretapping to limit journalists' and the public's right to know crucial information about the activities of their governments.



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FISCAL MATTERS

GEORGIA—PARLIAMENT CONSENTS TO NEW PARTY FUNDING PROPOSAL

A new rule on state financing for political parties received [Parliamentary](#) approval in its first reading, according to a news article published by [CIVIL GEORGIA](#) on 11 May 2007. Under the proposed rule, major political parties will receive increased funding from the state budget starting 1 October 2007. A political party, which clears a 4% threshold in parliamentary elections and a 3% threshold in local self-government elections, will receive GEL 150,000 (USD 90,000). The draft law also proposes to ban parties from receiving financial donations from anonymous sources. To come into force, the proposal has to secure parliamentary approval with second and third readings.

UNITED KINGDOM

- **UPDATED GUIDANCE FOR CHARITIES' TRADING OPERATIONS PUBLISHED**

The [Charity Commission](#) has published its revised guidance on charities and trading to help charities avoid the potential risks of trading and get the most out of their trading activities, while also complying with their legal and fiscal requirements. According to latest news provided by the [GOVERNMENT NEWS NETWORK](#) on 25 May 2007, the guidance entitled "[Trustees, trade and tax - how charities may lawfully trade](#)" explains when and how charities may engage in trading. It is mainly about trading for the purpose of raising funds, rather than trading to carry out the charity's objects. It also explains when a separate trading company should be established to carry on such activity. This guidance and its summary version will replace the previous guidance Charities and Trading (CC35), published in July 2001.

- **TAX AND NON-CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE GUIDANCE REVISED**

[HM Revenue and Customs](#) has completely revised, updated, and re-titled the detailed guidance notes for charities about charitable expenditure, according to a HM Revenue and Customs [press release](#) on 2 May 2007. The notes reflect the provisions introduced by FA06 concerning the treatment of non-charitable expenditure and transactions with substantial donors.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

POLAND—ECHR RULES THAT POLAND VIOLATED FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

On 3 May 2007, the [European Court of Human Rights](#) made an historical ruling stating that Poland violated Art. 11 (freedom of assembly), Art. 13 (right to an effective means of appeal), and Art. 14 (ban on discrimination) of the [European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#), according to a news article published by [HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE NETWORK](#). The ruling in the case [Bączkowski and Others v. Poland](#) concerned the ban on organizing the Equality March 2005 in the Polish capital, issued by the President of Poland Lech



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Kaczynski in May 2005. The applicants complained that their right to peaceful assembly had been breached by the way in which the domestic authorities had applied relevant domestic law to their case. In its ruling, the Court noted that banning the demonstration could have deterred the applicants as well as other people from participating in demonstrations, because due to the lack of official permission to hold the demonstration they were deprived of official protection against potentially hostile counter-demonstrators.

ZIMBABWE—BAN ON RALLIES AND PROTESTS EXTENDED

Police authorities in Zimbabwe has extended a ban on political rallies and protests initially imposed for three months in February, according to news article published by [REUTERS](#) on 24 May 2007 (for previous coverage see [March 2007 issue of IJCSL-Newsletter](#)). The ban is extended up to 23 June in Harare Central, Harare South, Harare Suburban, and Mbare Districts. The main reason for the extension, according to the police, was to curb political violence and terror bombings that rocked Zimbabwe in recent months. The decision to extend the ban has faced fierce criticism from opposition leaders and civil society groups.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

CHINA—GOVERNMENT ABANDONS BLOG IDENTITY PLAN

The Chinese government is backing down from plans to force millions of Chinese bloggers to register their real names, according to a news article published by [BBC NEWS](#) on 23 May 2007. The [plans announced last year](#) provoked huge protest from Chinese internet users. The government had been arguing that real-name registration would protect internet users from libel, pornography and dissemination of other harmful information.

GLOBAL—

• WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY OBSERVED

Press freedom advocates around the world observed World Press Freedom on 3 May 2007. [World Press Freedom Day](#) reminds all governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as civil society of the crucial role a free press plays in strengthening democracies and fostering development around the world. Press freedom, safety of journalists, and impunity were the topics of [UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2007](#). Proclaimed by the U.N General Assembly in 1993, the Day has been [observed](#) on 3 May every year since.

• FREEDOM OF THE PRESS 2007 SURVEY RELEASED

Press freedom suffered a continued global decline in 2006, notes the [Freedom House](#) survey "[Freedom of the Press 2007: A Global Survey of Media Independence](#)," released on 1 May 2007. According to a Freedom House [press release](#), the most troubling trends were evident in Asia, the former Soviet Union



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and Latin America. The study points to improvements in several countries such as Italy, Nepal, Colombia, and Haiti; however, it shows mixed trends in Africa, as well as a continuation of a longer-term pattern of decline in press freedom in Asia, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union. Overall, the report examined 195 countries and territories and found 38 percent were rated Free, 30 percent were rated Partly Free, and 32 percent were rated Not Free. The study also warned of a growing effort to place restrictions on internet freedom by censoring, harassing, or shutting down sites that provide alternate sources of political commentary.

- **GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP OF WEBSITES IS INCREASING WORLDWIDE, STUDY REVEALS**

[MIT Press](#) will release in fall 2007 a book entitled “[Access Denied: the Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering](#)” – examining the political, legal, social, and cultural contexts of Internet filtering in several states from a variety of perspectives. The book chapters discuss the mechanisms and politics of Internet filtering, the strengths and limitations of the technology that powers it, the relevance of international law, ethical considerations for corporations that supply states with the tools for blocking and filtering, and the implications of Internet filtering for activist communities that increasingly rely on Internet technologies for communicating their missions. China, Iran, Myanmar, Syria, Tunisia, and Vietnam are cited as being particularly restrictive in censoring political websites. The study added that several Middle Eastern countries had the most extensive filters for websites. In addition Central Asian nations Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were also named among the countries where governments interfere in citizens’ access to the Internet. The book is devoted to a study of internet filtering conducted by the [OPENNET INITIATIVE](#). According to a news article by [BBC](#) on 18 May 2007, the study found that 25 of 41 countries surveyed showed evidence of content filtering.

KAZAKHSTAN—NEW LAW ON NATIONAL SYMBOLS APPROVED

[Kazakhstan Parliament](#) has approved a draft constitutional law, “On National Symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan.” According to a news article published by [INTERFAX-KAZAKHSTAN](#) on 27 April 2007, the document regulates the display of the national flag and coat of arms at public entities, educational entities and institutions, military units, commands and other institutions, as well as the replacement and destruction of national symbols when required. The document also regulates the reproduction and performance of the national anthem on television and radio. The bill also stipulates that the general secondary curriculum include a course on national symbols. The bill has been forwarded to the president for signing.

SOMALIA—COMMENTS ON NEW DRAFT MEDIA LAW RELEASED

A draft law setting out a regulatory regime for all journalism and media activities has been released by Ministry of Information. In a recent [memorandum](#), issued in May 2007, Article 19 has drawn attention towards the strict obligations of accuracy, which the draft seeks to enforce through the imposition of harsh criminal penalties. Article



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19 claims that the restrictions imposed on all journalists, in apparent pursuit of protecting the public's right to receive high quality information, go far beyond what is allowed under international law and will likely end up impeding free media.

THAILAND—

- **NEW LAW LIMITING INTERNET FREE EXPRESSION APPROVED**

On 9 May 2007, the National Legislative Assembly in Thailand passed the Computer Related Offences Act. The new legislation gives government legal authority to act on Internet abuse and provides for harsh prison terms for offenders. According to an Article 19 [press release](#), freedom of expression advocates claim the law seriously undermines the right to freedom of expression. They claim the new legislation: provides unclear criteria on what constitute “offences;” seeks disproportionate punishments to violators; “competent officials” are endowed with extremely broad powers, which are subjected to only minimal judicial scrutiny; and liability is extended to service providers, effectively requiring them to become censors. The controversial draft bill was widely criticized earlier for the amount of control it gave to authorities. However, Article 16 of the bill has now been amended so that officials need to seek authorization from the court before dealing with suspected illegal activity.

- **COMMUNITY RADIO CRACKDOWN LAUNCHED**

Thailand's military-backed government has launched a crackdown on community radio stations across the nation, according to a news article published by [THE ANATOLIAN TIMES](#) on 18 May 2007. The public relations department is checking content on every community radio station to see whether it violates country's national security.

TURKEY—“ LAW ON INTERNET USE” PASSED

The law on “The preparation of Internet publications and crimes connected with these publications” was passed by Parliament on 4 May 2007. According to a news article published by [BIA.NET](#) on 16 May 2007, the law stipulates that reasonable suspicion of a crime being committed will lead to blocked access. The decision to block access will be made by a judge during investigation of a crime, and by a court during its prosecution. In urgent cases, a public prosecutor can also decide to block access to the Internet for 24 hours, pending approval by a judge. In addition, the Ministry for Telecommunication has been assigned the responsibility for controlling Internet content; in some cases it is also entitled to block access. The Ministry will be authorized to penalize Internet providers who do not block access to a website, initially with a fine, and after non-compliance with closure of the provider. The “Law on Internet Use” is criticized for its restrictive approach towards internet communications.



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FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

BELARUS—CAMPAIGN TO CHALLENGE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF RELIGION LAW GAINS MOMENTUM

Catholics, Orthodox adherents, and Protestants in Belarus have joined together to launch a nationwide campaign to gather signatures calling for a change to the country's restrictive [Religion Law](#). [FORUM 18 NEWS](#) Service notes in a news article published on 16 May 2007 that petitions to change the law require at least 50,000 signatures to be considered by the [Constitutional Court of the Republic of Belarus](#).

GLOBAL—USCIRF RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 2007

According to a [press release](#) issued on 2 May 2007, the [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) (USCIRF) published its [Annual Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (covering the period May 2006 through April 2007) together with its recommendations on which nations should be nominated "countries of particular concern (CPC). The CPC list covers those countries where authorities engage in systematic violations of religious freedom. The commission's CPC's for 2007 are: Burma, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. The [USCIRF](#) was created by the [International Religious Freedom Act of 1998](#) (IRFA) to monitor violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in [IRFA](#) and set forth in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the [U.S. President](#), the [Secretary of State](#), and [Congress](#).

IRAN—

- **NEW DIRECTIVES URGING TV PRODUCTIONS INCLUDE PRAYER SCENES ISSUED**

Under the new directives issued by the head of the state-run television, homegrown television productions that do not have prayer scenes will not be allowed to air, according to a news article published by [MIDDLE EAST TIMES](#) on 7 May 2007. All television and radio broadcast in Iran is state-controlled and the six national TV channels air a wide range of homegrown programs as well as foreign documentaries, series, and films. In recent years there has been broadcasting of recent Hollywood films and controversial talk shows putting politicians and celebrities in the hot seat. The formal role of religion, however, remains a dominant one and programming is interrupted for the broadcast of the daily prayers. Prayer ([Salah](#)) is one of the [five tenets \(pillars\) of Islam](#), which Muslims are required to perform five times a day.



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- **MANUFACTURING OF ISLAMIC BICYCLES FOR WOMEN TO START SOON**
Iran will soon start manufacturing “Islamic bicycles” for women to allow them to remain largely hidden from view in a cabin as they ride, according to a news article published by [RFE/RL](#) on 17 May 2007. Women must cover their heads and conceal their body shapes in public under Iran’s strict Islamic dress codes.

PAKISTAN—

- **GOVERNMENT PLANS TO INTRODUCE NEW LAW ON RELIGION**
Pakistan’s [National Assembly](#) (lower house of the [Parliament](#)) has adopted a draft bill on religion. According to a news article published by [ASIANEWS](#) on 9 May 2007, should the bill become law anyone who leaves Islam for another religion can be sentenced to death (if male) or life in prison ‘until repentance occurs’ (if female). Under the draft Apostasy Act 2006, apostates forfeit all their properties which are awarded only to their Muslim relatives; lose custody to any minor in their care and guardianship, including their biological children. The draft law grants 3 to 30 days to recant the conversion and return to Islam. In cases where the person returns to Islam judges can impose two-year sentences as punishment for the original ‘crime’. The accused can convert and reconvert up to three times before the death sentence becomes automatic. An offender’s own confession in court or the testimony by at least two adults is sufficient grounds for conviction in apostasy cases. Testimony by non Muslims is not, however, admissible in certain Pakistani courts.
- **MOVE TO AMEND BLASPHEMY LAWS CRUSHED**
The [Parliament](#) has crushed a move to amend [blasphemy laws](#) that prescribe harsh punishments, including the death penalty for insults to the Prophet Mohammed. According to a news article published by [KHALEEJ TIMES](#) on 8 May 2007, a Christian member of the lower house of the parliament had suggested a motion to tone down the legislation seeking equal penalties for offenders of any religion. The motion was rejected by opposition lawmakers, the ruling party, and members of the [Muttahida Majlis-e-Ammal Islamic religious alliance](#). The penal code of Pakistan sanctions the death penalty or life imprisonment for anyone found guilty of making derogatory remarks about the prophet.

SWITZERLAND—CAMPAIGN TO BAN CONSTRUCTION OF MINARETS LAUNCHED

Politicians in Switzerland have launched a campaign calling for a ban of the construction of minarets in the country. According to a news article published by [AL JAZEERA](#) on 15 May 2007, the campaign says [minarets](#) - the towers attached to mosques from which the Islamic call for prayer is issued - are a symbol of power and threaten law and order in Switzerland. The campaign must gather 100,000 signatures by November 2008 to force a national vote on the initiative which, if it gains a majority vote, would then be written into law. In Switzerland, only the mosques in Geneva and Zurich have minarets, and the call to prayer is not made from either of them.



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UNITED KINGDOM—

- **GUIDANCE ON NEW MEASURES TO OUTLAW DISCRIMINATION ON GROUNDS OF RELIGION OR BELIEF PUBLISHED**

The [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) has published an official “[Guidance on new measures to outlaw discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services.](#)” According to the department’s [press release](#), the document gives guidance on Part 2 of the Equality Act 2006, which comes into effect on 30 April 2007. Part 2 prohibits discrimination against a person because of her religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief) when providing goods, facilities, services, public functions, or education, and in management and disposal of premises. The guidance sets out the effect of the law and the exceptions provided. The most significant exceptions allow charities and other organizations whose purpose is related to religion or belief to serve particular communities. There are also exceptions in public functions, including education.

- **TEENAGER BANNED FROM WEARING CHASTITY RING HAVING INSCRIPTION FROM THE BIBLE**

A Christian teenager will go to the high court this summer to challenge the decision of her school to ban her from wearing a celibacy ring on the grounds that it is her basic human right to express her religious beliefs, according to a news article published by the [GUARDIAN](#) on 14 May 2007. The main argument for Lydia Playfoot is that the school is discriminatory by banning her from wearing the ring because it allows pupils from other faiths to manifest their faith through religious ornaments. The case has been in the legal pipeline for two years after Lydia was first banned from wearing the chastity ring, which has an inscription from the Bible, when she was 14.

UNITED STATES—WITNESSES AND JURORS BEING SWORN IN AT STATE COURTHOUSES CAN TAKE THEIR OATH USING ANY RELIGIOUS TEXT, NOT JUST THE BIBLE, RULES NC COURT

A Muslim living in North Carolina may take a courtroom oath on the Koran, a North Carolina Superior Court judge has ruled in a decision that calls on the state to treat all religions equally, according to ACLU [press release](#) on 24 May 2007. The [ruling](#) came after the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU) sought court order clarifying that phrase “Holy Scriptures” in state law is broad enough to allow the use of multiple religious texts in addition to the Christian Bible in the administration of courtroom oaths. In his decision, Wake County Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway found that witnesses may be sworn in “in a fashion that is most binding and obligatory upon the witness's conscience.” That means a Muslim may swear on the Koran, a Jew on the Hebrew Scriptures, and a Hindu on the Bhagavad Gita. The lawsuit was originally filed in July 2005 in Superior Court in Wake County on behalf of the ACLU of North Carolina’s statewide membership of approximately 8,000 individuals of many



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different faiths, including Islam and Judaism. The state has thirty days to appeal the ruling.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

CHINA—LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR NGOS AND CHARITABLE GIVING TO BE STRENGTHENED.

Recent articles published in [Peoples Daily](#) and [China Daily](#) include updates on developments with regard to the legal framework for the NGO sector, the [Charity Law](#), and [tax legislation to support charitable giving](#) previously discussed on the IJCSL website. Li Ligu, Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs, said on 22 May 2007 that “The ministry is preparing the draft of a charity law.” He also suggested that, “Regulations on disaster-relief donations will also be amended to eradicate illegal and messy fundraising activities.” Sun Weilin, Director of the NGO Bureau at the Ministry is also reported to have said that a detailed draft of new legislation will “allow more room for NGOs to grow.” In other news with regard to the Charity Law, a seminar will be held to discuss its proposals in June 2007.

IRELAND—CHARITIES BILL 2007 PUBLISHED

The Irish Government has approved the publication of [Charities Bill 2007](#), according to Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs [press release](#) on 5 April 2007. The purpose of the Bill is to enact a reform of the law relating to charities in order to ensure accountability and to protect against abuse of charitable status and fraud. It will also enhance public trust and confidence in charities and increase transparency in the sector. The Bill, together with the Charities Acts 1961 and 1973, and the Street and House to House Collections Act 1962, will provide for a composite regulatory framework for charities through a combination of new legislative provisions and retention of existing charities legislation, with updating, where appropriate. Under the bill, there will be a new independent Charities Regulatory Authority (with a Charity Appeals Tribunal), a Register of Charities and updating of the law relating to fundraising. However, a new legal structure for charitable organizations, the Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO), which had been recommended, has been left out to be considered and treated as a separate question.

SCOTLAND—NEW CHARITIES RE-ORGANISATIONS (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2007 COMES INTO FORCE

New Charities Reorganisations (Scotland) Regulations 2007 came into force on 31 May 2007. The new regulations replace the provisions of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, with regard to charities, and enable charities to apply to the [Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator](#) (OSCR) for reorganization, where such powers do not exist in their constitutions. According to the [press release](#) on 8 May 2007, OSCR has announced a consultation process for its [draft guidance](#) for charities that may wish to



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reorganize. Charities may wish to wait until OSCR's consultation process has been completed and new guidance issued, before applying to reorganize.

UZBEKISTAN—NEW LAW ON CHARITY COMES INTO EFFECT

A new "[Law on Charity](#)" came into effect after being published on 3 May 2007. According to [a news article published by ICNL](#), the law establishes a basis for tax changes, especially significant in light of the ongoing effort of the Government to draft a new tax code. On the other hand, a provision of the new Law grants the Cabinet of Ministers the right to monitor and control charitable donations from foreigners, international and foreign organizations, potentially creating new barriers for foreign funders and local recipients of foreign aid.

UNITED KINGDOM—

• REPORT CALLS FOR REVISION OF CHARITY LAW

The rules must be revised to allow charities to become powerful forces for political change, notes the report published by the Advisory Group on Campaigning and the Voluntary Sector. According to a news article published by [SOCIETY GUARDIAN](#) on 23 May 2007, the report calls for changes to the legal framework that would clarify the rights of UK charities to campaign; a less rigid interpretation by the Charity Commission of what constitutes "political campaigning;" an end to the third sector's restricted access to broadcast media by removing the provision in the Communications Act 2003 that bans voluntary organizations from running "political" advertising campaigns; the repeal of elements of recent anti-terror and criminal legislation that inadvertently restrict legitimate protest; amendments to section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 which allows individuals to be stopped and searched by police without reasonable suspicion.

• CIVIL SOCIETY RAISES CONCERNS OVER DRAFT DOCUMENT FOR " MULTI-AGENCY INFORMATION SHARING"

According to a draft Home Office document leaked to *The Times*, professionals, including charity workers, doctors and council workers, should be legally required to inform the authorities if they suspect anyone of being at risk of becoming either a perpetrator or a victim of serious violence. According to a news article posted by [THE THIRD SECTOR ONLINE](#) on 21 May 2007, under the proposals for "multi-agency information sharing," that person's personal information, including their medical records, would then be shared between different government agencies. According to *The Times*, the document also suggested setting up new agencies for potential perpetrators and victims to carry out "full risk assessments", although it does not say what powers they would have to take preventative action. Third sector and other stake holders have expressed grave concerns on draft proposal claiming it would turn charities into "snoops for the state."



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MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

AFRICA—41ST SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION FOR HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS HELD IN GHANA

The [African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights](#) (ACHPR) in Accra, Ghana opened its [41st Ordinary session](#) on 16 May 2007. The session deals with the consideration of complaints and periodic reports and examination of promotional activities and other matters as may be proposed by the various participants to the proceedings of the Commission, especially by nongovernmental organizations. Immediately prior to the ACHPR session, an NGO Forum was organized, which brought together approximately 100 civil society representatives from across the continent. Their recommendations were forwarded to the ACHPR for the Commissioners' consideration. The NGO Forum also requested the Commission to adopt a resolution calling on the Ethiopian government to release all human rights defenders.

EUROPEAN UNION—COMMISSION LEADERS MEET WITH FAITH LEADERS TO DISCUSS HUMAN DIGNITY

In a bid to foster mutual respect among faiths and promote fundamental rights, leading representatives of Europe's Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths and leaders of the EU's Institutions met in Brussels in a seminar hosted by the EU on 15 May 2007. According to a European Commission [press release](#), the discussions focused on issues regarding the role religions and religious communities can play in Europe based on human dignity and the promotion of common values beyond Europe's frontiers. The participants also looked at the question whether a dialogue between cultures and religions can be strengthened by means of common values, and if tolerance is a helpful concept.

RUSSIA—INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS EVICTED FROM MOSCOW OFFICE

Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ) which is Russia's largest independent association of journalists has been evicted from its Moscow offices, according to [IPI press release](#) on 18 May 2007. The notice was issued by Federal Property Management Agency. The Agency provided no explanation for its decision to evict the RUJ, but local press reports said the premises would be given to Russia Today, a state-owned English-language satellite television channel tasked with creating a positive image of Russia abroad. The eviction comes just days before the RUJ was to host the 26th World Congress of Journalists, an international gathering of media workers on 28 May.

TANZANIA—NEW RESEARCH PAPER EXAMINING TRI-PARTITE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOS, GOVERNMENT, AND DONOR COMMUNITY PUBLISHED

A new Research Report has recently been published by [Research on Poverty Alleviation](#) (REPOA). According to REPOA's [news update](#), the Special Paper 07.21 entitled "[Tanzanian Non-Governmental Organisations - Their Perceptions of Their](#)



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[Relationships with the Government of Tanzania and Donors, and Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Development](#)” gives an overview of the social and political context of Tanzanian civil society, examining the tri-partite relationship between NGOs, the government and the donor community in Tanzania.

UNITED NATIONS—UN COUNCIL STOPS EXAMINING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN IRAN AND UZBEKISTAN

The [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) has decided to drop its examination of human rights violations in Iran and Uzbekistan, according to a news article published by [ASIA NEWS](#) on 27 March 2007. The step followed a recommendation by most of the five states overseeing the special procedure against Iran and Uzbekistan, which are suspected of violating the human rights of their respective populations. The Council gave no further details on the decision. The decision has been widely criticized by rights organizations and some governments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GLOBAL—CIVICUS 7TH WORLD ASSEMBLY HELD

The [CIVICUS 7th World Assembly](#) was held from 23 – 27 May 2007 in Glasgow, Scotland. The CIVICUS World Assembly is a forum for international civil society representatives to get together, exchange ideas, experiences and build strategies for a just world. This year’s World Assembly was hosted by [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) and focused on accountability.

GLOBAL—

- **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2007 LAUNCHED**

Amnesty International (AI) launched the [Amnesty International Report 2007](#) on 23 May 2007. According to an AI [press release](#), the report provides a comprehensive global overview of the state of the world’s human rights. The report documents human rights issues of concern to Amnesty International during 2006 in 153 countries around the world and reflects the organization’s activities during the year to promote human rights and to campaign against specific human rights abuses. In the “War on Terror” chapter of the report, AI exposed and denounced hundreds of cases of torture and other grave violations of human rights claimed by states to be a necessary response to security threats. AI also strongly condemned deliberate attacks on civilians and indiscriminate.

- **TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL’S GLOBAL CORRUPTION REPORT 2007 PUBLISHED**

Transparency International (TI) has issued “[Global Corruption Report 2007](#).” This year’s report focuses on corruption in judicial systems. According to the TI [press release](#) on 24 May 2007, the Global Corruption Report 2007 concludes that a corrupt judiciary erodes the international community’s ability to prosecute transnational crime and inhibits access to justice and redress for human rights



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violations. It undermines economic growth by damaging the trust of the investment community, and impedes efforts to reduce poverty. The publication brings together scholars, judges, and civil society activists from around the world to examine how, why and where corruption mars judicial processes, and to reflect on reforms and activism that help remedy a corruption-tainted system.

RESOURCES

GLOBAL—

- **ACCESS TO INFORMATION ONLINE GUIDE LAUNCHED**

[Article 19](#) has released an online guide on access to information entitled “[Guide for a Campaign in Favour of the Right to Access Information in Latin America.](#)” According to an [Article 19 press release](#) on 10 May 2007, the guide is a one-stop information source for promoting access to information laws, particularly in Latin America region. The Guide addresses the importance and the definitions of freedom of information, includes international standards on access to information, the key elements of an access to information law and an interactive map with an overview of pending and existing legislation in Latin American countries. The Guide also describes the steps to take to organize a campaign on access to information, outlines the role of NGOs in implementing access to information and includes a list of relevant publications for further reading on the topics. The guide is available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

- **ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT ‘ DEVELOPMENT AS ACCOUNTABILITY’ LAUNCHED**

During the plenary session of the [CIVICUS World Assembly](#), the Chief Executive of AccountAbility launched the new A21 publication entitled “[Development as Accountability](#)” analyzing accountability innovations related to development. The report launched on 24 May 2007 showcases experiments across a wide range of collaborative frameworks, unleashing the potential for poor people to work more effectively with governments, businesses, NGOs and donors. The report also demonstrates that further innovation in collaborative governance - from informal conflict resolution to formal multi-stakeholder partnerships - is essential both for the “Global 100” development partnerships and for the thousands of collaborations springing up at regional and local level.

UNITED KINGDOM—GUIDE TO THE CHARITIES ACT 2006 PUBLISHED

The Cabinet Office and Charity Commission have launched “[Charities Act 2006 - what trustees need to know](#),” a concise guide to the biggest shake-up of charity law for centuries, according to the Cabinet Office and Charity Commission [news release](#) on 16 May 2007. The guide is primarily aimed at those running small charities that may not have the knowledge or expertise to make the most of the new laws. The guide comes in response to Joint Committee on the draft Charities Bill



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recommendation that the government prepare a plain English guide to the new legislation

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