



IJCSL NEWSLETTER

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ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

CANADA—NEW ANTI-TERRORISM MEASURES INTRODUCED

The Government has introduced a [bill](#) to reinstate two controversial elements ([investigative hearings and preventive arrests](#)) of its anti-terrorism law, according to a news article published by [International Herald Tribune](#). The [investigative hearing provision](#) would allow authorities to compel a person to testify in a secret, judicial proceeding to help police collect evidence about past or future terrorist activity. The [preventive arrest provisions](#) give police power to make preventive arrests without a warrant of anyone suspected of an imminent terrorist offence, and to detain them for up to three days before a judicial hearing of the evidence against them, reports [CanWest News Service](#).

JAPAN -- VISITORS TO BE FINGERPRINTED

Beginning 20 November 2007, foreign visitors will be required to be fingerprinted and photographed under a new measure intended to screen out terrorism suspects, [The New York Times](#) reported. The United States is currently the only country with such procedures. The new rule has come under fierce attack by rights groups. “This will further the perception in [Japan](#) that foreigners are terrorists, and at the same time rejects the idea that the Japanese could be terrorists as well,” the newspaper quoted Makoto Teranaka, secretary general of [Amnesty International](#) Japan, as saying. “In fact, all recent terrorist attacks have been conducted by the Japanese.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/world/asia/26briefs-japan.html?ex=1194321600&en=574a3f7cc5383e25&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

AFRICA—REGIONAL FOI CENTRE LAUNCHED

A coalition of Freedom of information supporters has launched a FOI regional centre in Lagos. According to a news article published by [RAP21](#), the “Africa Freedom of Information Centre” (AI) will provide technical assistance to civil society organizations involved in freedom of information works including drafting of access to information bills, advocacy for their passage into law, implementation, litigation, and monitoring activities.

CAYMAN ISLANDS—FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICE OPENED

The government has officially opened the Freedom of Information Office. The [Cayman Islands](#) joined some 70 countries around the world in guaranteeing the right to information when Legislative Assembly passed the [Freedom of Information Law](#) in August this year. According to a news article published by [Cayman Net News](#), the FOI unit is expected to lead and coordinate the implementation of the [FOI Law](#) and Regulations across the public sector. The Unit will also provide general guidance on interpreting sections of the [law](#), as well as on procedural and administrative



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requirements. Coverage of the [development of this FOI law in the Cayman Islands](#) is available in [previous issues of IJCSL-Newsletter](#).

NIGERIA—FOI BILL PASSES FIRST READING IN THE SENATE

The new FOI Bill has passed its first reading in the Senate following the veto on the last bill passed by the former National Assembly. According to a news article published by [AllAfrica](#), several NGOs and CSOs, including donor agencies, have clamored for the passage of the bill. So far, the FOI remains the most talked about bill that has not been enacted and the only bill that three different Senates will have considered.

UNITED KINGDOM—GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

The Government will review a number of areas of legislation relating to individual rights, including the right to protest outside Parliament and access information more freely, according to a [Prime Minister office's press release](#). The Government will, inter alia, look into the prospect of extending Freedom of Information legislation to cover many more aspects of public life, including public works carried out by privately contracted companies. Speedier access to historical records will also be considered.

FISCAL MATTERS

CANADA—

- **CHARITIES LAUNCH ETHICAL FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CODE**

Charity leaders across Canada have launched a self-policing ethical code entitled "[Ethical Fundraising & Financial Accountability Code](#)." The primary purpose of the Code is to assure donors of the integrity and accountability of charities that solicit and receive financial support. According to a news article published by [The Star](#), the charities that sign on will not be allowed to use commission-based fundraising and donors will have a right to learn how much of each dollar is spent on fundraising. Adoption of the code, which was developed by [Imagine Canada](#) (the umbrella group that speaks for charities in Canada), is voluntary. [Imagine Canada](#) says it intends to review an applicant charity's operations before giving its seal of approval, which the charity can use when seeking donations. Donors will be able to complain to [Imagine Canada](#) about possible breaches of the code, and the charity in question could have its approval revoked if there is a serious problem. The code will take effect next year.

- **SUPREME COURT RULES PROMOTION OF AMATEUR SPORTS NOT CHARITABLE**

Groups that promote and organize youth sports do not qualify for charitable status under the [Income Tax Act](#), unless their sports activities are ancillary to a



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recognized charitable purpose, the [Supreme Court of Canada](#) has ruled in [A.Y.S.A. Amateur Youth Soccer Association v. Canada \(Revenue Agency\)](#), according to a news article published by [CanWest News Service](#). The issue before the court was whether the Association is a charity for purposes of the Income Tax Act, which would allow it to issue tax receipts enabling its donors to obtain income tax deductions or credits. "Participating in sport is generally beneficial," the Supreme Court said, but sport alone does not make an organization charitable, unless it has another core purpose, such as education. The court, however, seems to suggest that it may be desirable as a matter of policy to give sports associations the tax advantages of charitable status, saying "it is a task better suited to Parliament than the courts." A case note on this decision will be found in Vol.5, No. 4 of the International Journal of Civil Society Law, published in October 2007.

GERMANY—BUNDESRAT CONCLUDES CONSIDERATION OF THE “LAW FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION”

The [October Newsletter](#) of the Maecenata Institut announced that on 21 September 2007 the German Bundesrat (Upper House of Parliament) concluded its consideration of the “Law for Further Strengthening of Civic Participation.” The Institut’s [analysis of the law](#) is available along with the [full text of the law](#) (in German). The new legislation, which makes many changes in tax privileges, including increasing the statutory limit on deductible donations from 5 % or 10% to 20% for all public benefit organizations, is effective from 1 January 2007. (For previous coverage see [March 2007 issue of IJCSL-Newsletter](#) at [www.icsl.org](#) under publications and [IJCSL-Newsletter](#).)

UNITED STATES—

- **COMPLIANCE GUIDES FOR PUBLIC CHARITIES AND PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS RELEASED**

[The Internal Revenue Service](#) (IRS) has issued new Compliance Guides for Section 501(c)(3) Public Charities and Private Foundations. The [compliance guide for 501\(c\)\(3\) Public Charities](#) and [compliance guide for 501\(c\)\(3\) Private Foundations](#) provide overviews of activities that could jeopardize exempt status as well as compliance information on recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

- **BIGGEST TRIAL OF A MUSLIM CHARITY ENDS IN NO CONVICTIONS**

The trial against former [Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development](#), which was once the nation's largest Islamic charity, ended with no convictions on charges that the Foundation’s leaders had funneled millions of dollars to Middle East terrorists, according to a news article published by [The Washington Post](#). The defendants were indicted in July 2004 for illegally funneling aid overseas to Hamas, the Palestinian group which U.S. authorities designated as a terrorist organization in 1997. The foundation faced 197 criminal violations related to funding terrorism. The jurors



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acquitted the former chairman of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development on virtually all the charges brought against him and deadlocked on the other charges that had been lodged against four other former leaders of the charity.

- **IRS AND CONGRESS SCRUTINIZE DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS AS ROLLOVER DEADLINE APPROACHES**

[Philanthropy News Digest](#) reports that governance problems at small donor-advised funds are raising concerns at the [Internal Revenue Service](#) and on Capitol Hill about tax-free rollovers from IRAs into charitable investments. While a recent investigation by the IRS found that some organizations are using donor-advised funds as tax loopholes, it has not seen the problem at any of the large financial firms that sponsor such funds. Still, Congress, which must approve extension of the rollover provision contained in the Pension Protection Act of 2006 by year's end — or see it expire — has expressed reservations. Assets held in donor-advised funds rose 24 percent, to \$21.6 billion, last year, making them the fastest-growing vehicle for charitable donations, according to the National Philanthropic Trust. But only a few such funds have been cited for abusing their tax-exempt status, said Bryan Clontz, president of consulting firm Charitable Solutions LLC. Others, however, cite a general lack of transparency on the part of donor-advised funds as a problem that needs to be addressed.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

MYANMAR-- UN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT TO MAKE OFFICIAL VISIT

Myanmar's Foreign Minister, Nyan Win, in a letter sent to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, confirmed that it has agreed to the visit by Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, the Secretary-General's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar. Mr. Win suggested that Mr. Pinheiro's visit take place before the summit meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is scheduled to open on 17 November 2007. The announcement from the [UN Information Centre](#) comes as Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Special Envoy for Myanmar, continues his consultations with the country's neighbors and regional partners ahead of a planned return trip to Myanmar next month. The wider diplomatic efforts by the UN follow what Mr. Ban has described as the "abhorrent and unacceptable" response of the Government to recent peaceful demonstrations.

OSCE—HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TO MONITOR FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

As part of a project on monitoring freedom of assembly in Moldova, the [OSCE](#) has recently completed a training course for human rights defenders. According to OSCE [press release](#) on 19 October 2007, the human rights defenders will monitor assemblies throughout the country and compile their observations into a report to be submitted to



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the Government with the aim of further improving the legislative framework and respect for human rights and freedoms. The project builds upon the ODIHR "[Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly](#)" emphasizing the State's positive obligation to protect peaceful assemblies. Moldovan authorities have recently elaborated a draft law on assemblies.

PAKISTAN—GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS BANNING ‘LARGE’ RALLIES AND PROCESSIONS DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The [Ministry of Interior](#) has drafted a code of conduct suggesting a ban on rallies and processions during political campaign in the up-coming general elections, according to a news article published by [Reuters](#). The proposed code suggests banning only ‘large’ public processions on the streets. The public meetings will not be banned but these will have to be held by the parties only at identified places, reports [Daily Times](#). The [opposition parties have rejected](#) any such move and vowed to defy any ban on rallies. They have filed a motion with the Senate for debate on the matter, alleging that the draft code violates [Article 15](#) (freedom of movement etc.), [Article 16](#) (freedom of assembly) and [Article 17](#) (freedom of association) of the Constitution.

UGANDA—NEW GUIDELINES FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND PUBLIC GATHERINGS DRAFTED

The Uganda Human Rights Commission has released draft guidelines for law enforcement authorities to deal with demonstrations including rallies, charity walks, and processions, according to a news article published by [New Vision Online](#). The draft guidelines propose that organizers be required to notify the relevant government authorities at least seven days before an event; police permission would be required for demonstration and assemblies that seek to be held in gazetted or restricted venues. The draft provisions and guidelines will be submitted to the Cabinet for discussion.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

HUNGARY—PARLIAMENT APPROVES COMPENSATION FOR HATE SPEECH

The Parliament accepted amendments to the Hungarian civil code (PTK.§ 76/A), which would allow compensation for those members of racial, national, ethnic, religious, ideological, or sexual minorities are addressed by offensive statements concerning their minority status. According to the [Budapest Times](#), the Association of Rights of Freedom (TASZ) is asking the Head of State not to sign the Act but to send it to the Constitutional Court for preliminary ruling because it does not require a specific intention to offend.



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KAZAKHSTAN—OSCE SEEKS WITHDRAWAL OF DRAFT AMENDMENT TO DEFAMATION LAW

The [OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media](#) (RFOM), Miklós Haraszti, has asked the Kazakh Interior Minister to withdraw recent draft amendments to the country's defamation law. “The Interior Ministry amendments, issued in late September, offer substantially less decriminalization than the Media Law draft from April this year, while the Civil Code proposals would only worsen the situation because they would make it possible to sue for damages even in cases involving truthful information,” Haraszti said. The amendments maintain special protection for the President. Criticism of some categories of public officials could still be punished with prison sentences.

VENEZUELA—CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ALLOWING PRESIDENT TO CENSOR MEDIA PROPOSED

A draft constitutional amendment allowing the President to censor media during public emergencies has been adopted as part of President Hugo Chávez's constitutional reform package to be approved by the National Assembly, according to a news article published by [Miami Herald](#). A final decision on constitutional amendments will be decided by a single yes-no vote in a national referendum on 2 December 2007.

SWAZILAND—EDITOR CLEARED OF CONTEMPT OF LEGISLATURE

The [Media Institute of Southern Africa](#) has reported that on 10 October 2007, Sunday Times editor Mbongeni Mbingo was cleared of contempt charges brought against him by the House of Assembly. He had been charged with contempt of Parliament when he criticized the Speaker and House of Assembly in 2007 for blocking a motion by another MP, who sought to question an alleged secret move by Cabinet and traditional authorities to amend certain clauses in the Constitution without the knowledge of the nation. A five-member Select Committee was appointed to investigate the editor and his newspaper. If found guilty, Mbingo would have faced a maximum of two years in jail or an E4000 (approx. US\$600) fine. The Select Committee found that the editor did not in any way abuse freedom of the press, but was legitimately expressing his journalistic opinion which is enshrined in the Section 24 of the Constitution of Swaziland. Many see this as a signal victory for the freedom of expression in Swaziland.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—NEWSPAPERS EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT SIGNS CODE OF ETHICS

Editors of leading Arabic and English newspapers have signed a code of ethics defining their responsibilities and regulating their practices. The Code underlines journalistic commitment to a responsible media to ensure the credibility, accuracy, and unbiased nature of news content. According to a news article published by [Zawya](#), the document highlights respect for the right of the public to have access to true and accurate information; the need to correct facts that have been proved wrong; respect for the privacy of individuals; avoidance of inflaming public sentiment or the use of media organs for purposes of libel or slander; drawing a clear line between



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reported stories and commercial articles; respect Islam and the divine religions, and avoidance of insulting them; promotion of healthy competition between publications; and limitations on the acceptance of gifts by journalists.

UNITED STATES—

- **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSES PRESS SHIELD LAW 398-21**

On 16 October 2007 the House of Representatives voted 398-21 in favor of the Free Flow of Information Act of 2007, which clarifies the right of journalists to protect confidential sources. A [report](#) from the National Press Photographers Association suggests that the Act, HR 2102, would for the first time extend shield protections already in effect in thirty-three states and the District of Columbia to the federal level. Under the bill, reporters cannot be forced to testify in criminal cases or disclose source information in court except in cases of a specific threat to national security or when the information is necessary for the prosecution or defense of the case and cannot be obtained by any other avenue. Attention now shifts to the Senate, where the Senate Judiciary Committee approved a parallel, though slightly narrower, bill on 4 October 2007.

- **MARINE'S FATHER SUES CHURCH; JURY AWARDS DAMAGES**

Before the March 2006 funeral for Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder, a Marine who was killed in Iraq, protesters from the Westboro Baptist Church, a tiny fundamentalist splinter group, picketed the service with signs that read "God Hates You" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers." Corporal Snyder's father, sued the church in United States District Court here, claiming invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The Westboro protesters, whose church is in Topeka, Kan., frequently picket the funerals of military officials and soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan because church leaders assert that God is killing soldiers to punish America for condoning homosexuality. The [New York Times reported](#) that on 30 October 2007 the jury awarded the father nearly \$11 million. Experts say the case is a test of the limits of free speech.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

CANADA—BILL TO BAN CANADIAN VOTERS WITH FACE VEILS INTRODUCED

The Government has introduced a bill in the House of Commons to amend the [Canada Elections Act](#) to confirm the visual identification of voters. The [bill follows a decision by Elections Canada](#) to allow a Muslim woman to vote with her face covered by a [burqa](#) or [niqab](#) during three Quebec by-elections in September provided she produces a second original piece of identification or brings another elector registered in the same polling division who can vouch for her. According to a news article by [Canada News Centre](#), the bill would reverse that decision by expressly mandating that voters be required to have their faces uncovered when being identified to



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vote. This would apply to both the registration and voting stages, to both advance and regular polls, to voting in person at the office of the Returning Officer, and during all federal elections and by-elections. To ensure sufficient administrative flexibility, the bill provides technical amendments to ensure that the provisions are administered in a manner that is respectful of the religious beliefs of voters, for instance, veiled Muslim women be allowed to uncover their faces behind a screen and in front of a female elections official.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC—BILL SEEKING EQUAL TREATMENT FOR ALL CHURCHES INTRODUCED

A bill seeking equal treatment for all churches has been submitted in the lower chamber of the [Dominican Republic](#). According to a news article published by [Dominican Today](#), the bill on Religious Associations would create the National Registry of Religious Associations. In order to operate in the Dominican territory, the Catholic and other churches, councils, ministries, ecclesiastic and para-ecclesiastic associations, confraternities and institutions will have to register with the National Registry. All religious associations will be tax exempt, and the State will have to provide a monthly subsidy for the churches.

MALAYSIA—LAWS ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSION UNDER REVIEW

The government is reviewing its laws on religious conversion. According to a news article posted by [Gulf Times](#), Malaysian courts have declined to recognize conversions involving Muslims, referring them to the country's separate Islamic legal system which, in accordance with sharia law, ordinarily does not permit Muslims to renounce their faith. Recent cases have usually involved couples where one partner is Muslim and the other is not. In Malaysia, Muslims cannot marry non-Muslims, and it can be almost impossible to legally leave Islam despite a constitutional right to freedom of worship. The rulings have angered non-Muslims who believe their constitutional rights are being eroded, but their attempts to voice concern in public have met with a backlash from Muslims who feel conversions threaten Islam. Islam is Malaysia's official religion and is practiced by 60% of its people.

SWEDEN—GOVERNMENT PREPARES NEW RULES TO CURB INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

The central government is drafting a set of new rules to curb the influence of religion in private confessional schools, according to a news article published by [International Herald Tribune](#). The measure is taken as a move to prevent the spread of fundamentalism in [Sweden](#), which is a highly secular country. There are 67 elementary schools and six high schools with a confessional orientation in Sweden. Most of them are Christian. They are outside the public school system, but are governed by Sweden's law on education. The new rules, which need parliamentary approval, would be introduced in 2009.



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TAJIKISTAN—JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES BANNED

Tajikistan has outlawed the [Jehovah’s Witnesses](#), saying its missionary activities violated Tajik laws, reported [ABC news](#). The government claims the Jehovah’s Witnesses engaged in unlawful activities including door-to-door missionary activities, calls to refuse to serve in the armed forces, and intolerance of other religions. There are currently 600 followers of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Tajikistan – a predominantly Muslim Central Asian state.

THAILAND—NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDERS BILL INTRODUCING PUNISHMENTS FOR OFFENSES AGAINST BUDDHISM

The National Legislative Assembly (NLA) is considering a bill that will introduce harsh punishments for various offenses against Buddhism, including sexual affairs with monks, novices, and nuns, according to a news article published by [The Buddhist Channel](#). The article reports that the bill establishes a jail term of 10-25 years and/or a fine of 500,000-1,000,000 baht (USD 15,748 - 31,496) for insulting, offending, imitating, and distorting Buddhism and the Lord Buddha and a jail term of 5-10 years and/or a fine of 100,000-500,000 baht (USD 3,149 - 15,748) for damaging Buddhist objects, personnel, and places. People who have any form of sexual affair with monks, novices, or nuns are liable to 5-10 years in jail and/or a fine of 100,000-500,000 baht (USD 3,149 - 15,748). The bill, however, does not include any punishments for monks, novices, or nuns who engage in sexual relations.



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TIBET—BUDDHIST PRIESTS ARRESTED FOR PROTESTING LIMITS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Phayul.com reports that in the aftermath of massive “Patriotic Education” campaign launched by the Chinese authorities in Lihang area since the beginning of September this year, cases of arbitrary arrests and detention of Tibetans who openly defied and challenged the authorities for violating their rights have began to surface from the area. On 3 October 2007, the Chinese authorities required monks to participate in a “Patriotic education” exercise. During the session a monk of the monastery, stood up and challenged the officials openly saying “The Chinese government’s proclamation of right to religious freedom enjoyed by the Tibetan people stands ghastly contradictory as we cannot place a portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at our residence and monastery.” He and another monk were arrested by the local Public Security Bureau.



TRANSDINESTER—RESTRICTIVE DRAFT RELIGION LAW PROPOSED

A restrictive draft Religion Law is being proposed in the parliament of the unrecognized entity of Transdniester, Forum 18 News Service has learnt. The new draft - if adopted - would stop any new religious communities, unaffiliated to existing registered denominations, from gaining legal status for ten years. This would deny them the right to produce and import literature, set up religious colleges, and invite religious workers from outside Transdniester. Independent Protestant congregations or faiths such as the Jehovah's Witnesses are likely to be most affected.

TUNISIA—LAW BANNING WOMEN FROM WEARING ISLAMIC VEIL REVOKED

A Tunisian administrative court has revoked a 1986 law banning women from wearing the Islamic veil, reports the Digital Journal. Under the canceled law women were not allowed to wear the veil at work places and at schools because it was considered a "sectarian outfit" and a mark of political and religious extremism. The court considered the law "interference in . . . personal freedoms," threatening the freedom of belief guaranteed in the constitution.



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TURKEY—RELIGION COURSES MADE OPTIONAL IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The government has decided to make religious courses optional in elementary and secondary schools in [Turkey](#). According to a news article published by [Today's Zama](#), students who do not want to attend courses on religion will be allowed to abstain from attending them but will have to receive “universal religious knowledge” courses where all religions are covered equally. The ruling follows a decision handed down by the [European Court of Human Rights](#) on the petition of Hasan Zengin - a follower of the [Alevi](#) faith who did not want his daughter to take compulsory religious courses. The [ECtHR](#) in the case of [Hasan & Eylem Zengin v. Turkey](#) ruled that compulsory courses on religious culture and ethics in Turkish primary and secondary schools are taught in a way that violates the [European Convention on Human Rights](#). The court instructed the government to pay court fees in the amount of 3,700 euros (5,243 USD) to the Zengin family.

UNITED KINGDOM—RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED ACT COMES INTO FORCE

The [Racial and Religious Hatred Act](#) came into effect on 1 October 2007. According to [Home Office press release](#), the new law forbids threats and other intimidating statements intended to stir up hatred against people because of their religious beliefs. Although Jews and Sikhs were found by courts to be racial groups (and thus protected under race hatred laws), members of other religions - including Muslims and Christians - were not. The new legislation equalizes that situation by giving all religions the same protection. The Act, which amends the Public Order Act 1986, introduces a new criminal offense of stirring up racial hatred against a person on racial or religious grounds. Anyone found guilty of the offense will face fine or imprisonment for up to seven years. The legislation remains controversial on the grounds that it restricts freedom of speech. For [previous coverage](#) see [IJCSL-Newsletter](#).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

BAHRAIN—NEW NGO LAW EXPECTED TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY END OF 2007

A new law regulating civil society organizations (CSO's) will be implemented by the end of 2007, according to a news article published by [Gulf Daily News](#). The new law establishes different types of CSO's - public interest, vocational, philanthropic, Islamic, womens, social, expatriate, etc. The law, which is under review for further amendments and NGO input, would allow CSO's to get involved in political affairs, receive financial aid from abroad, carry out profit-generating projects, and establish unions.



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MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

UNITED KINGDOM—NATIONAL PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON BILL OF RIGHTS AND WRITTEN CONSTITUTION ANNOUNCED

The UK Prime Minister has announced the start of a nationwide public consultation to draw up a Bill of Rights and establish a written constitution. According to [Prime Minister Office's press release](#) on 25 October 2007, the consultation will focus primarily on how to "entrench and enhance" individual freedoms while also detailing the responsibilities "that flow from British citizenship." The UK currently has no single overarching constitutional document or rights Charter, although its working "unwritten constitution" includes a variety of fundamental statutes such as the [Magna Carat](#) supported by a long judicial tradition of protecting civil liberties and the famous [Bill of Rights of 1689](#).

UNITED STATES—ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY'S TAX EXEMPT STATUS IN QUESTION

Three former Oral Roberts University professors sued the school and four administrators in Tulsa County District Court on Tuesday, alleging wrongful termination and wrongful causing of one professor's resignation, according to a report published in [The New York Times](#). The professors said they lost their jobs because they turned over to administrators a report that alleged the Richard Roberts family extensively spent university money for personal uses. Roberts is ORU's president. Plaintiff Tim Brooker, who coordinated ORU's government program, said ORU's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit status could be at risk because Roberts required him to make his students work for 2006 Tulsa mayoral candidate Randi Miller's campaign, in violation of laws that prohibit nonprofit groups from getting involved in partisan political campaigns. A complaint was lodged with the Internal Revenue Service, and Tim Brooker claims he was told to take the blame for the university helping a campaign. [Newsvine](#) reported on 18 October 2007 that the President had temporarily stepped down.

RESOURCES

EUROPEAN UNION—EFC DEVELOPS COMPARATIVE HIGHLIGHTS OF FOUNDATION LAWS

The [European Foundation Centre](#) (EFC) has developed a [Comparative Highlights of Foundation Laws](#) across the countries of the European Union. According to EFC [press release](#) on 25 October 2007, the charts provide comparison of legal and fiscal regulations and practices. These comprehensive charts act as a benchmarking tool of good legal and fiscal provisions and practices at the national level, which can have an impact on those countries revisiting their foundation and tax laws.



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MIDDLE EAST—NEW RESEARCH PAPER ON THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ME REGION PUBLISHED

[International NGO Training and Research Centre](#) (INTRAC) has published an overview of the state of civil society in the [Middle East](#) region. This paper sketches the historical background and the economic, social, and political context in which civil society operates in the region. It also describes the work that CSOs do in each country, the challenges they face, and their capacity needs. Common issues facing civil society across the region are also analyzed. To download the paper click [here](#).

SAUDI ARABIA—OFFICIAL WEBSITE FOR RELIGIOUS RULINGS LAUNCHED

The government has launched an official website www.alifta.com for [Fatwa's](#) (religious rulings) issued by authorized religious scholars. According to a news article published by [AFP](#), the [site](#) provides quick access to authentic religious rulings and allows users to post questions and get replies from the council, which operates the site. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is governed according to the [Sharia law](#).

UNITED STATES—INDEPENDENT SECTOR PANEL RELEASES PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Panel on the Nonprofit Sector has released *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice: A Guide for Charities and Foundations*. [The Guide](#) represents the first time that charities and foundations reflecting a broad cross-section of the American nonprofit community have come together to develop principles of ethical conduct, accountability and transparency that they aspire to and encourage all organizations to follow. The Panel strongly encourages nonprofits to examine the 33 Principles and determine how best to apply them to their operations.



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