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ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

PAKISTAN—14-POINT ANTI-TERRORISM RESOLUTION ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY

On 22 October 2008, the Parliament unanimously adopted a 14-point anti-terrorism resolution. According to a news article published by [PAKISTAN LINK](#), the resolution gives a roadmap to deal with terrorism problems in the country particularly in the Tribal Areas. The resolution provides for dialogue as primary instrument of conflict resolution; redistribution of resources to resolve the Baluchistan violence; civil agencies to replace military in troubled areas; and compensation for violence victims as well as rehabilitation for the displaced.

TURKEY—CREATION OF ANTI-TERROR UNIT ANNOUNCED

The Turkish government recently announced plans to create an anti-terror unit under the control of the Interior Ministry. According to a news article published by [TODAY'S ZAMAN](#), the details of the unit have not been disclosed yet, but senior government officials are quoted as having said that one of the core duties of the unit will be to gradually reduce the military's role in domestic security while enhancing coordination among the two primary domestic security organizations in the fight against terror.

UNITED KINGDOM—

- **GOVERNMENT PLANS SPYING ON EVERY CALL AND EMAIL**

UK ministers agreed on spending up to £12 billion (USD\$21.2 billion) on the new spying system that will monitor emails, internet browsing records and habits, and telephone conversations of everyone in Britain, reports [TIMES ONLINE](#). According to the plans revealed, hundreds of clandestine probes will be installed to monitor customers live on two of the country's biggest internet and mobile phone providers - BT and Vodafone. The authorities claim the clandestine monitoring will help fight terrorism and crime. Under the UK's current law a warrant is required to intercept communications, but that will change with the implementation of the new database.

- **CONTROVERSIAL ANTI-TERRORISM PLAN REJECTED**

The House of Lords rejected a government proposal to tighten anti-terrorism laws, according to a news article published by [REUTERS](#). The proposal would have allowed police to hold suspects for 42 days before having to charge or release them. The current limit is 28 days.

- **“COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (THIRTEENTH REPORT): COUNTER-TERRORISM BILL” PUBLISHED**

The Parliamentary Joint Human Rights Committee has published “[Counter-Terrorism Policy and Human Rights \(Thirteenth Report\): Counter-Terrorism Bill](#).” The report addresses the Government's counter-terrorism strategy and deals specifically with the Counter-Terrorism Bill. It brings together the recommendations and proposed amendments to the Counter-Terrorism Bill



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taking into account takes into account relevant concerns expressed by various international bodies about the human rights compatibility of certain aspects of the Bill and some other aspects of the UK's counter-terrorism laws.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

BARBADOS—FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL COMPLETED

Minister of State, Senator Maxine McClean, has [announced the completion](#) of Freedom of Information Bill, according to a news article published by [THE BARBADOS ADVOCATE](#). The draft [FREEDOM OF INFORMATION](#) legislation has been [RELEASED](#) for public consultation. The consultation period ran through 31 October 2008.

CYPRUS—DEPUTIES INSIST ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Parliament is seeking to change the Freedom of Information Law after a report by the Ombudswoman revealed that it was full of loopholes that favor the state over the public's right to know, according to a news article published by [CYPRUS INTERNET DIRECTORY](#). The House Institutions Committee has unanimously decided to amend the law, especially regarding the authorities given to public servants.

GUAM—QUICK GUIDE TO USING GUAM SUNSHINE ACT

The [Pacific Daily News](#) provides a [quick informational guide](#) to help navigate the Guam Sunshine Act. [Guam](#)'s Freedom of Information Act provisions are covered by the Sunshine Law in the Guam Code Annotated, Title 5, Government Operations, Chapter 10, Freedom of Information.

JORDAN—ALLIANCE TO IMPROVE FOI LAW LAUNCHED

The Jordanian Alliance for the Freedom of Information and Transparency was officially launched by the Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre (UJRC), according to a news article published by [THE JORDAN TIMES](#). The Alliance aims to enhance access to information and analyze the 2007 Access to Information Law. The Alliance also intends to carry out a legal and analytical study on the legislative environment which represents the legal frame work of access to information and its compatibility with the relevant international criteria protecting this right.

RUSSIA—NEW STUDY REVEALS THAT ACCESS TO INFORMATION FACES CONTRADICTIONS

The [Institute for Freedom of Information Development](#) - the leading access-to-information organization in Russia, has published a detailed [legal and sociological analysis](#) of the state of access in the Russian Federation, identifying contradictions between the [Constitutional right guaranteed in Article 29](#) (for every person to “seek, get, transfer, produce and disseminate information by any lawful means”) and the actual legal norms and official practices. This story was reported in a [press release](#) by [www.freedominfo.org](#).



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TANZANIA—FOI BILL COALITION CAMPAIGN SUBMITS DRAFT MEDIA SERVICES BILL

A news article published by [IFEX](#) states that on 8 October 2008, Tanzania's Freedom of Information Bill Coalition Campaign submitted a draft Media Services Bill to the Minister of Information and Culture, Hon. George Mkuchika. The draft is part of civil society efforts to advocate for media policy changes in Tanzania.

TONGA—FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL CONTEMPLATED

The Freedom of Information bill is expected to be introduced in the Parliament next year. The Attorney General of the [Kingdom of Tonga](#), Ms. Alisi Taumoepeau, is quoted to have revealed this, according to a news article published by [RADIO AUSTRALIA](#). The freedom of information bill will help promote good governance, participatory democracy, effective development, and increase government accountability in Tonga.

UNITED STATES—LAW REQUIRING CONNECTICUT MUNICIPALITIES TO UPDATE WEBSITES ON AGENDAS AND MINUTES MEETINGS GOES INTO EFFECT

A new law went into effect on 1 October 2008 in Connecticut requiring all municipalities to post meeting minutes on their websites within seven days after the meeting and to post the agendas of special meetings at least 24 hours in advance, according to a news article published by [HARTFORD COURANT](#). Town officials across the state are saying the law is an unfunded state mandate they do not have the resources to handle. Some small towns pulled their websites, fearing they could not comply with the new law.

FISCAL MATTERS

CANADA—LEGAL RISK MANAGEMENT CHECKLISTS FOR CHARITIES UPDATED

[Legal Risk Management Checklists](#) for [Charities](#) and [Not-for-Profit Organizations](#) have been updated as of October 2008. The updated version is available at [Carters Professional Corporation](#) (Carters) website. The checklists provide a brief outline of some of the most important issues faced by charities and not-for-profit organizations in Canada, such as liability issues and the directors and/or executive's due diligence in the operation of the organization.

ENGLAND AND WALES—

- **GUIDANCE FOR CHARITIES ON FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPENSATION SCHEME PUBLISHED**

The Charity Commission has published guidance for charities and their trustees to help them understand the [Financial Services Compensation Scheme](#) (FSCS), according to a Charity Commission [press release](#). The guidance explains when charities and trustees are eligible to claim compensation for the loss of their savings and deposits should their bank or building society fail.



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- **NEW INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION GUIDANCE RELEASED**

The Charity Commission's Guide for Trustees and Examiners on the Independent Examination of Charity Accounts now has separate comprehensive [guidance for independent examiners](#), according to a Charity Commission update. Independent Examination is a form of external scrutiny of accounts specifically designed for charities. It offers a lower cost option for the 95 per cent of charities whose income and assets fall below the statutory audit threshold.

UNITED KINGDOM—

- **CHARITIES SEEK GOVERNMENT AID BECAUSE OF BANK FAILURES**

British charities, particularly hard hit by the failure of Icelandic Banks, are asking the British Government to bail them out, according to a news article published by the [CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY](#). The Charities have asked the Government to set up a \$788 million emergency fund to help struggling organizations. Potential nonprofit losses due to the Icelandic problems are estimated at \$189-million, reports [THE GUARDIAN](#).

- **NEW GUIDE TO COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PUBLISHED**

A publication commissioned by Co-operatives UK and written by consultant Jim Brown entitled "[Community Investment - using Industrial and Provident Society legislation](#)" is now available on-line. According to a news article published by [Co-operatives UK](#), the guide gives an overview and practical guide for activists, advisors and professionals on the use of community share issues.

UNITED STATES—

- **ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS**

The annual [Western Conference on Tax Exempt Organizations](#) will be held on 20-21 November 2008, in Los Angeles, California. The two-day program for tax professionals and organization executives is jointly sponsored by IRS Exempt Organizations and Loyola Law School.

- **WORKSHOPS FOR TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS**

IRS Exempt Organizations is offering a one-day [workshop for small and mid-sized section 501\(c\)\(3\) exempt organizations](#) at various locations around the country. Each workshop, presented by experienced Exempt Organizations specialists, will explain what 501(c)(3) organizations must do to keep their tax-exempt status and comply with tax obligations. More information is available [here](#).



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FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

CANADA—WAL-MART SHUTS DOWN ANOTHER UNIONIZED TIRE AND LUBRICATION SHOP IN QUÉBEC

According to a news article published by [MARKETWIRE](#), Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has closed a unionized tire and lubrication shop in Québec because of a labor agreement that it said would have triggered wage and price increase which is unworkable. A Québec arbitrator imposed a collective agreement on the shop in August. It is the second time Wal-Mart has shut a Québec outlet after its workers decided to form a union. According to UFCW [press release](#), the National President of UFCW Canada has said that the closure of a unionized Wal-Mart Tire and Lube Express is in blatant disregard of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In June 2007 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that under the Charter's Freedom of Association protections, workers in Canada are guaranteed the right to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining.

MALDIVES—MPs ARGUE FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY BILL UNCONSTITUTIONAL

The People's Majlis at its fifth sitting of the third session held on 20 October 2008 has accepted the bill on Freedom of Assembly and passed the bill to the Committee on Public Affairs, reports [MIADHU NEWS](#). According to a news article published by [MINIVAN NEWS](#), the opposition MPs have criticized the bill and said the government-drafted Bill, in its present form, violates the current constitutional. Freedom of assembly has a mixed history in the Maldives. Under the previous constitution, in force from 1998 to August 2008, the freedom was granted "in a manner that does not contravene the law" – leaving a grey area for restrictions. Under the new constitution ratified this year, freedom of assembly is specifically granted "without prior permission" as part of a new bill of rights.

NEPAL—EU REPORT SAYS CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS DID NOT MEET FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND EXPRESSION STANDARDS

According to a news article published by [NEPALNEWS](#), the final report of the European Union Election Observation Mission, Nepal, 2008 reveals that the Constituent Assembly (CA) election held in Nepal in April 2008, did not fully meet many international standards in areas such as the right of freedom of assembly and expression. The EU, in its report, recommended that electoral legislation should be consolidated bringing the diverse range of legal provisions into a single act and a broad national debate should consider reforming and simplifying the electoral system that ensures inclusiveness of social and religious groups. This report comes as part of a comprehensive assessment conducted by the EU EOM of the election to the CA in accordance with international standards, best practices, and the laws of Nepal. The report was made public on 16 October 2008.



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SWAZILAND—KING MSWATI BANS CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS FROM MEETING
[King Mswati III](#) has [banned the meeting of a regional version of the World Social Forum](#) from meeting in the country, alleging it will not be in national interest, and will compromise peace, security and stability. According to a news article published by [MONSTERS AND CRITICS](#), those attending the meeting were expected to discuss calls on Mswati to accept democratic reforms in Swaziland. The ban on the meeting prompted speculation the king is trying to silence his critics. [King Mswati](#) has been blamed for Swaziland's poverty and AIDs epidemic and criticized for his extravagant lifestyle.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

BOTSWANA—PARLIAMENT SET TO DEBATE RESTRICTIVE MEDIA BILL

The media bill is expected to be debated in November during the next Parliamentary sitting. According to a news article published by [AFRIQUE EN LIGNE](#), analysts say that the bill, if passed into law, will seriously curtail media freedom. The bill sets up a mechanism for registering and accrediting - actually licensing - media practitioners, issuing them with identity cards and setting up a Press Council with complaints and appeals committees. The complaints committee will have the authority to impose fines and even de-register the media practitioner. The bill is critically analyzed in an article published in [MMEGI ONLINE](#).

CHINA—

- **RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN JOURNALISTS DECREASED**

The Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, has signed a decree easing the restrictions on foreign journalists, according to a news article posted by [MSNBC](#). Under the new regulations, foreign reporters would not be required to get government permission to travel within the country or to interview Chinese citizens. The rules replace regulations on foreign media coverage originally established in 1990. However, journalists will still not be allowed to travel to the restive region of Tibet and other restricted areas without getting special permission from local authorities. China's tight grip over domestic journalists remains intact.

- **PROMINENT BUSINESS WEEKLY SUSPENDED FOR 3 MONTHS**

China Business Post, a widely read business weekly that reported on alleged mishandling of problem assets at one of the country's biggest state banks, has been suspended for 3-months, reports the [REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS](#). A [legal complaint has been filed](#) against the Inner Mongolia bureau of press and publications demanding that the Bureau rescind the three month suspension order and pay symbolic compensation to the reporter for damaging her reputation.



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- **LAWYERS CALLING FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM DISMISSED FROM JOBS**

According to a [press release](#) by [HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA](#), lawyers who recently published an appeal on the Internet calling for direct election of the officials of the state-controlled Beijing Lawyers Association [equivalent to a bar association] were dismissed by the law firm. Those lawyers had called into question the legitimacy of the three-decades old Beijing Lawyers Association, and demanded the Lawyers Association allow independent candidates to run in the triennial election at the end of 2008. The Beijing Lawyers Association responded that the appeal was “illegal,” and a “total repudiation of China’s current lawyers administrative, judicial, and political system.”

EUROPEAN UNION—PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON MEDIA FREEDOM

On 3 October 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a [resolution](#) on media freedom. Resolution 1636, “[Indicators for media in a democracy](#),” highlights media freedom as an essential requirement for democracy. The resolution calls on member states to analyze their own media situations regularly to identify shortcomings in their national media legislation and practice and take appropriate measures to remedy them. The resolution also urges national parliaments to draw up periodic reports on media freedom in their countries to be discussed at the European level.

GEORGIA—DRAFT LAW ON BROADCASTING ADOPTED

The [Parliament of the Republic of Georgia](#) has adopted a draft law on broadcasting. According to a news article published by [CIVIL GEORGIA](#), the draft law requires the Georgian Public Broadcaster to regularly air political debates in between elections, with the equal participation of all political forces in Parliament, as well as political groups financed from the state budget. The measure is being considered as part of the president’s “new wave of democratic reforms.”

GLOBAL—

- **60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARTICLE 19 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMEMORATED**

To commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an [International Symposium on Freedom of Expression](#) was held on 29 October 2008. More about the symposium, including documents, a link to the website, speeches, the concept paper and the outcomes, features, and sources is available on the [UNESCO website](#).

- **INTERNET GIANTS BAND TOGETHER AGAINST ONLINE SPEECH RESTRICTIONS**

A diverse coalition consisting of Yahoo!, Google, Microsoft, and other leading information and communications companies along with major human rights organizations, academics, investors and technology leaders have launched



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the [Global Network Initiative](#) (GNI), according to [eWEEK](#) press release. The GNI establishes a framework for providing communication products and services the world over, while ensuring a sustained commitment to protect fundamental human rights including freedom of expression and privacy. Participating companies and other GNI members have agreed on [Implementation Guidelines](#) and a [Governance, Accountability and Learning Framework](#) that will ensure that the [principles](#) are reflected in their activities and business operations.

TANZANIA—3-MONTH BAN IMPOSED ON WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

The Tanzanian government has suspended the weekly Mwanahalisi newspaper for three months for allegedly publishing “seditious” articles exposing a secret plot by government insiders to topple President Jakaya Kikwete, according to a news article published by [THIS DAY](#). The government authorities allege that the story was malicious, intended to cause misunderstandings in the president's family and create tension between the President and other senior ruling party leaders. [Media stakeholders and leading journalists condemned the ban](#) and called on Tanzanian authorities to immediately reverse the ban, and to refrain from pursuing legal charges against the paper and its staff.

THAILAND—GOVERNMENT PLANS CAMPAIGN TO BLOCK WEBSITES CRITICAL OF THE MONARCHY

The Thai government is planning a large-scale campaign to block websites considered insulting to the monarchy and the royal family, according to a news article posted by [PROFY](#). The Information Ministry says it has received many complaints about such sites, most of which are based abroad. Thailand’s royals are supposed to be above politics and are protected by strict laws which prohibit criticism, reports [BBC NEWS](#). Some critics of the move claim that the plan to block some websites is a measure to simply silence attempts from people unhappy about the current government to voice their protests or use online resources as a means to organize civil provocation in the future.

TURKEY—GOVERNMENT TIGHTENS CONTROLS ON INTERNET SPEECH

The government and courts have banned 850 websites this year, including YouTube, according to a news article published by [THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR](#). The latest ban by the Turkish court was on Blogger - the popular blog-hosting site owned by Google - because of illegal material found on a few sites on its servers. The newly created Telecommunications Directorate, a government office that monitors the Internet, is allowed to shut down sites without a court order. The agency has been behind 612 bans this year. The recent bans by the government have raised concerns about censorship in a country with an already troubling record on freedom of speech.



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FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

CUBA—FIRST-EVER RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OPENED

On 19 October 2008 Cuba's first Russian Orthodox cathedral was inaugurated in the capital, Havana, according to a news article published by [MSNBC](#). The new [Our Lady of Kazan](#) cathedral has been welcomed by many in Cuba's Russian community. Cuban President, Raul Castro, and Russian diplomats attended the inauguration ceremony.

GLOBAL—FREEDOM OF RELIGION CONTINUES TO FACE SERIOUS CHALLENGES AROUND THE WORLD

"The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion continues to face serious challenges and breaches in a number of regions around the world," Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, told the Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly. According to a news article published by [ZENITH](#), the Holy See representative emphasized the need for a timely and concerted effort on the part of the legislative, executive and judiciary to ensure that the fundamental right to religious freedom, in any given country, is defended and promoted.

IRAN—PARLIAMENT APPROVES DEATH PENALTY FOR APOSTASY

The Iranian Parliament voted in favor of a bill entitled the "Islamic Penal Code" that mandates death penalty for Iranians who convert from Islam to any other religion ([apostasy](#)), according to a news article published by [COMPASS DIRECT NEWS](#). Until now Iranian judges could impose the death penalty in such cases only on the basis of Islamic law and fatwas, not on the basis of Iranian law. The bill is currently due to be sent back to the Legislative Commission for amendments before being brought to the parliament for a final vote, reports [CHRISTIAN TODAY](#). Before it becomes law, it also has to be vetted by the Council of Guardians, a twelve-member legislative body with the power to veto any bill that does not conform to Islamic law and the constitution.

KYRGYZSTAN—DRAFT RELIGION LAW APPROVED

Kyrgyzstan's Parliament has approved a restrictive draft of Religion Law, according to a news article published by [INSTITUTE FOR WAR AND PEACE REPORTING](#). The draft law reportedly passed its final reading on 21 October 2008. According to [FORUM 18 NEWS SERVICE](#), the authorities have not disclosed the latest draft and therefore, the contents of the legislation are not clear. However, it is reported to include: a ban on unregistered religious activity; a threshold of 200 adult citizens to gain state registration; a ban on "proselytism," a definition of a "sect," and a ban on the free distribution of literature. Kyrgyzstan has a population of more than five million people. 70 per cent are Muslims, 5 per cent are Orthodox Christians and the remaining 25 per cent is divided between atheists and other religious denominations.



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TURKEY—TOP COURT FOUND PM INVOLVED IN ANTI-SECULAR ACTIVITIES

According to the news article published by [REUTERS](#), Turkey's highest court has accused Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan, and senior members of the ruling AK party of involvement in anti-secular activities including lifting a ban on wearing Muslim headscarves at university and efforts to lower the age at which students can attend Qur'an classes. The court said that such activities were against Article 68 of the constitution.

UNITED KINGDOM—RELEASE OF “LITTLEBIGPLANET” DELAYED BECAUSE MUSIC TRACK CONTAINED QUOTATIONS FROM THE KORAN

Sony has recalled copies of its new Playstation 3 game “[LittleBigPlanet](#)” from shops worldwide after it learned that the soundtrack featured mixing of some phrases from the Holy Koran with music that may offend Muslims, according to a news article published by [BBC NEWS](#). Sony has taken immediate action to rectify this and apologized for any offence that this may have caused to the Muslims. A new version of the game without the music has been produced for release and will go on sale on 3 November 2008 in the UK and 29 October 2008 in the US.

UNITED STATES—SURVEY FOUND RELIGIOUS LEADERS REJECT ENDORSING POLITICAL CANDIDATES

America's religious leaders have apparently rejected the Religious Right's efforts to politicize their pulpits, according to [Americans United for Separation of Church and State press release](#). A new poll by LifeWay Research has found that 95 percent of pastors strongly disagree that their church has provided any endorsements. Barry W. Lynn, executive director, said the Religious Right's aggressive efforts to lure churches into partisan politics and violate federal tax law have been largely unsuccessful this year. The Internal Revenue Code forbids all tax-exempt entities from intervening in campaigns by endorsing or opposing candidates.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ETHIOPIA—DRAFT CHARITIES AND SOCIETIES BILL SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT AND HRW ANALYSIS RELEASED

The draft NGO bill has been submitted to the Parliament, according to a news article published by [AFP](#). The draft law of “[Charities and Societies Proclamation](#)” has been strongly criticized by Human Rights Watch in a [report](#) recently [released](#) analyzing the draft legislation. The HRW has called the Ethiopian law makers to reject the draft law claiming the legislation, if passed, would severely undermine human rights by creating a Charities and Societies Agency with broad authority to interfere in CSO internal workings and to ban any CSO that government does not like. It also contravenes fundamental human rights guaranteed by international law and by Ethiopia's constitution. The government has [condemned the report](#) saying that it was interference in a sovereign country.



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RWANDA GOVERNMENT MULLS NEW NGO LAW

The Government of Rwanda is expected to gazette the new NGO law soon. According to a news article published by [ALLAFRICA](#), the new law provides a legal framework for governing religious bodies and local and international NGOs. The draft law proposed by the ministry of Local Government defines the term national NGO to “encompass any voluntary organization, association or any autonomous, non profit making association organized at local or national level in order to improve economic, social and cultural development and to plead in favor of public interests of a group, individuals or organization with view of promoting common interest of their members.” The draft law classifies NGOs into three main categories: Public Interest Organizations (PIO) - organizations serving public interests; Common Interest Organizations (CIO) - organizations acting in a specific domain in favor of their members; and Foundations - NGOs whose purpose is either to manage common or public properties or project of their interests.

SRI LANKA—GOVERNMENT MULLS NEW NGO BILL

Government is set to introduce a new bill to closely monitor NGO activities, Minister Lionel Premasiri, is reported to have said in Sri Lankan parliament, reports [DAILY MIRROR](#). The law is expected to target NGOs promoting separatism and self-determination in the Nuwara Eliya district. Reportedly, there are some 3,500 NGOs operating in Sri Lanka but only 2,500 have been registered.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

CHINA—GOVERNMENT VOWS TO TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO WORKING DEMOCRACY IN JUST OVER A DECADE

China will finish its political and institutional reforms by 2020, one of the country’s most influential reformers, Zhou Tianyong has said. Zhou is an adviser to the [Communist Party](#)’s Central Committee. According to a news article published by [DAILY INDIA](#), during the 12-year plan to establish a democratic platform, China vows to have extensive public participation in policy-making including drawing up new legislation.

GLOBAL--MOVIE PLANNED ON LIFE OF PROPHET MOHAMMAD

According to a news article published by [REUTERS](#), Hollywood plans a remake of one of an English-language biopic of the prophet Muhammad. Oscar Zoghbi, a producer who worked on the 1976 original “[The Message](#),” announced that a new version to be filmed around the holy cities of Mecca and Medina will go into production soon. The new film “The Messenger of Peace,” will be on the life of the Prophet Muhammad and engage audiences on the journey that led to the birth of Islam. “[The Message](#),” a 1977 Hollywood classic is often applauded by Muslims as an example of how commercial Western cinema can respect Islam.



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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT—CHINESE DISSIDENT WINS TOP EU RIGHTS PRIZE

On 23 October 2008, [the European Parliament](#) awarded its top human rights award -- the “[Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought](#)”-- to a Chinese dissident, Hu Jia, reports [REUTERS ALERT NET](#). Starting with advocacy for rural AIDS sufferers, Hu emerged as one of China’s most vocal advocates of democratic rights, religious freedom and of self-determination for Tibet. He was arrested and charged with “inciting subversion of state power” following his testimony on human rights in China via conference call to the European Parliament’s Human Rights Subcommittee on 26 November 2007. He was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison in China in April 2008. Hu, 35, had already spent many months under house arrest with his wife and child.

PAKISTAN—CABINET APPROVES BILL TO SET UP INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS BODY

The Federal Cabinet has approved a draft bill for the establishment of a National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), according to a news article published by [DAILY TIMES](#). It is intended to fulfill the United Nations General Assembly resolution requiring member states to set up independent human rights institutions. The bill will soon be submitted to the parliament.

PORTUGAL—PARLIAMENT REJECTS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Portugal’s Parliament has rejected a proposed law to allow same-sex marriages. According to a news article published by [ASSOCIATED PRESS](#), the proposal was put forward by two minor opposition parties, which argued that the Portuguese Constitution grants equal rights for all and protection against discrimination. Same-sex marriage is permitted in only three European Union nations — Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain.

UNITED KINGDOM—WOMAN TO LEAD ISLAMIC CONGREGATION

A woman is to lead a congregation of men and women in an Islamic prayer service for the first time in the UK, according to a news article published by [BBC](#). The move has provoked opposition as the tradition is that imams - always men - hold mixed services. Some believe it is against Islam for a woman to do so.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CANADA—2008 ANNUAL CHURCH & CHARITY LAW SEMINAR

The [2008 Annual Church & Charity Law Seminar](#), hosted by Carters Professional Corporation in Toronto, Ontario, will be held on 6 November 2008 at the Young-Nak Korean Presbyterian Church of Toronto. Held annually since 1994, this seminar is designed to provide practical information on current legal issues to assist churches and charities understand developing trends in the law and avoid unnecessary exposure



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to legal liability. More details about the seminar and registration are available at Carters website.

GLOBAL—NEW PUBLICATION ON “VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM” LAUNCHED

CIVICUS, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme have launched a joint publication entitled “[Volunteering and Social Activism: Pathways for participation in human development](#).” According to a CIVICUS [press release](#), the paper is based on a study undertaken by the three organizations in 2007-2008. The background study finds that both volunteering and social activism is important strategies for fostering people’s participation in social change and human development.

ENGLAND AND WALES—NEW ON-LINE REGISTER OF CHARITIES LAUNCHED

The [Charity Commission](#) has launched the new [register of charities](#) at its web site providing color graphics and details of activities, trustees, key financial information and whether charities file their accounts and returns on time, according to a Charity Commission [press release](#). For charities with incomes over £500,000, new financial profiles show what they receive and how they spend their money. The move is aimed at increasing the transparency and accountability of the charity sector and help people access information about charities. Previously, the same financial information was available to the public only in the form of written documents held online.

UGANDA—HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION VOWS TO DEFEND FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, EXPRESSION AND OPINION, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The National Human Rights Commission has embarked on a public awareness campaign to ensure that freedom of assembly, expression and opinion, and access to information are respected and appreciated, according to a news article published by [THE NEW VISION](#). The commission is expected to open more regional offices throughout the country and strengthen the existing ones.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—FIRST EVER NGO TO PROTECT CHILDREN’S RIGHTS ANNOUNCED

The Children’s Department at the Ministry of Social Affair announced the establishment of UAE’s first ever NGO to protect the rights of children under a new law. According to a news article published by [GULF NEWS](#), the NGO aims to spread awareness on children’s rights and provide all means of support for children in difficulty. The Ministry of Social Affairs has asked all the stakeholders to submit their suggestions on the draft before passing on the law to the cabinet. The consultation period ends 30 November 2008.

RESOURCES

CANADA—



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- [Charities Legislation & Commentary, 2009 Edition](#) is [now available](#). Selected and prepared by charity law experts, Terrance Carter, Maria Elena Hoffstein and Professor Adam Parachin, this publication provides a useful reference for researching key federal and Ontario statutes governing charitable organizations. This book includes key sections from over 50 relevant Acts and regulations and an overview commentary of the selected legislation. For more details, see the Carters Professional Corporation website.
- The October 2008 issue of [CHARITY LAW UPDATE](#) informing Charities and Not-For-Profit Organizations in Canada of recent legal developments and risk management considerations is now available on Carters website. [Carters Professional Corporation](#) is a leading authority on legal developments in Charities and Not-For-Profit Organizations in Canada.

ENGLAND AND WALES—SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC BENEFIT CONSULTATIONS RELEASED

On 7 October 2008, the [Charity Commission](#) published the [summaries of the responses to its recent public benefit consultations](#), according to a Charity Commission [press release](#). The four consultations were on draft supplementary guidance on Public Benefit and the Advancement of Religion, Public Benefit and the Prevention or Relief of Poverty, Public Benefit and the Advancement of Education and Public Benefit and Fee-charging.

SCOTLAND—PARLIAMENT'S FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PAGES DEVELOP NEW AND IMPROVED DISCLOSURE LOG

The Scottish Parliament has a new version of its [Freedom of Information disclosure log](#), with direct links to online information and documents released in response to a request.



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