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Inside IRIS Georgia is a monthly newsletter published by IRIS Georgia, a USAID contractor implementing the Rule of Law Program in Georgia. IRIS Georgia is a satellite office of the IRIS Center at the University of Maryland. IRIS is an internationally-recognized source of research and advisory expertise for addressing economic growth and governance issues in transition and developing countries. See the Web site at <http://www.iris.umd.edu> for more information.

## Inside IRIS Georgia



2004 Has Been a Success for IRIS !!!

Dear Reader,

The end of 2004 has come, and it is time to reflect on the past year and evaluate our Rule of Law activities.

2004 has been a challenging year for Georgia, especially with significant changes in the government and the launch of a new wave of reforms. There is still a lot of work to do, and IRIS and its grantees are committed to supporting further development of Rule of Law in Georgia.

Throughout the year, IRIS collaborated with the government of Georgia, as well as many local and international organizations on trainings, informational seminars, publications and IT support. These collaborations were extremely productive and led to positive results.

This holiday edition of the newsletter *Inside IRIS Georgia* focuses on the successes in 2004. All of the program activities could not be included, so this newsletter serves to outline the main activities of IRIS and our partner organizations during 2004.

While we have witnessed significant progress in transparency and human rights policies in recent years, our work is not complete. We certainly look forward to 2005 and further advances in the Rule of Law in Georgia.

We wish you happy holidays and a wonderful new year !!!

IRIS Georgia Team



Public Awareness

Increasing the level of public awareness on various legal issues has always been one of IRIS's top priorities, especially through the active involvement of its grantees, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Liberty Institute (LI) and Internews.

GYLA lawyers conducted town hall meetings, bus tours, roundtables and workshops and published materials and newspaper inserts to explain various legal issues to target audiences in layman's terms.

During the year, LI gathered audiences representing different groups at Press Club Sessions to discuss challenging legal issues such as: tax amnesty, the RICO Act and incidents of pre-detention torture by police. LI has also been printing a monthly newsletter to highlight such issues as corruption and transparency.

Both LI and GYLA have been successful at bringing issues of human rights violation to the attention of the government and at demanding positive changes.

This year Internews again broadcasted television Public Service Announcements and documentaries on various Rule of Law issues, including the freedom of speech, preliminary detention and corruption.

On a smaller scale, grantees International Center of Civil Culture and Radio Green Wave aired radio programs to facilitate discussions on human rights principles in Georgian culture. Alfami creatively expressed this theme through artistic

posters, exhibitions and films.

A group of scholars in literature, cinema and art history worked with the Pluralism Center to publish a set of articles in a book entitled, *Human Rights and Georgian Culture*.

Ozurgeti Young Teachers Union held Karl Popper debates and other events for children on topics concerning children's rights, and they also completed related documentaries. One of their films was presented to the first lady, Mrs. Roelofs, who delivered it to President Saakashvili.

IRIS conducted an extensive poster campaign on billboards and railway carriages to publicize various constitutional rights.

In sum, IRIS and its partners worked with different audiences and in a variety of formats to promote key Rule of Law messages.

Support for Legal Services

GYLA and Article 42 have been implementing free legal aid programs. GYLA provided free consultations to people in Tbilisi and the regions, and Article 42 defended cases in Tbilisi District Court.

An IRIS consultant collaborated with grantees to create legal aid software, which will serve as an important tool for establishing a database and statistics for future referrals.

LI carried out a fact-finding program to ensure that human rights violations are reported immediately.

More Open and Transparent Government

The United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) has been advocating and teaching the FOI chapter of the General Administrative Code, assisted by related brochures and calendars distributed to the public. UNAG experts have discovered 27 contradictions in Chapter III of Administrative Code and other laws. Draft amendments were presented to Parliament.

LI finished research and printed a book about Amicus Curiae ("court's friend"), an excellent source of information for possible reforms to the judiciary.

IRIS conducted research on transparency in the court system, the results of which were presented and distributed at a roundtable.

The Young Economists worked on reform of licensing regulations, a common area of corruption. They distributed relevant information, trained target groups and set up a hotline for entrepreneurs to discuss licensing issues.

IRIS held roundtables on various other issues, including judicial transparency and the President's Authority to hear Administrative Claims.

In November, IRIS assisted with the purchase of equipment for the new Citizens' Reception Hall at the Ministry of Justice, which will facilitate better access for the public.



Support for Legislative Drafting

IRIS worked closely with Parliament of Georgia and several organizations to provide legislative drafting support.

In January, IRIS held a workshop to discuss proposed draft anticorruption laws, including provisions on plea bargaining.

IRIS organized a State of Emergency workshop in which Georgian and international state-of-emergency legislation was discussed and related research prepared by IRIS was presented.

IRIS local experts analyzed the newly adopted law on the Status of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the results of which were presented to Parliament.

Liberty Institute actively participated in the drafting process of the new Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression. IRIS experts also submitted some comments on the draft law. Most of these comments were reflected in the newly adopted law.

In February, Parliament adopted an amendment to the Constitution of Georgia, and IRIS local experts conducted in-depth analysis of the law.

IRIS will continue to collaborate with the Parliament of Georgia.

Information and training

IRIS Georgia provided significant information and training in 2004.

In June, IRIS held a presentation of its activities and its grantees in Telavi (Kakheti region). This location was chosen to expose the regional population to recent rule-of-law developments. IRIS grantees in the region had an opportunity to distribute their materials as well as to display advertisements and other media programs.

Throughout the year, IRIS staff attorneys delivered trainings and public lectures to various universities and audiences on issues under IRIS's Rule of Law program.

Anticorruption and Anti-trafficking Components

IRIS has been actively involved in anticorruption efforts through many different activities.

IRIS local experts participated in the creation of the Alternative Corruption Status Report of Georgia for OECD (ACN- Anti-Corruption Network) together with other members of the NGO Anticorruption Coalition.

After a request from the Anticorruption Policy Department (in the Security Council of Georgia), IRIS got involved in reviewing the draft State Anticorruption Vision Statement and Anticorruption Strategy Document, which was approved by the government.

IRIS was also informed that the government plans on creating a

more specific and far-reaching anti-corruption document. IRIS will provide advice on the new document as it relates to those areas that are within our portfolio.

Anti-trafficking Component

IRIS recently launched an anti-trafficking component of its Rule of Law Program. IRIS representatives held meetings with major international organizations and local NGOs in order to gather information about the work done thus far and to plan for future activities.

During the last three months, IRIS has been in contact with representatives of the Prosecutor General's Office, which is in charge of investigating trafficking cases. IRIS sent the Prosecutor's Office general materials about trafficking, the 2004 TIP (Trafficking in Persons) Report issued by the US State Department and other analytical documents.

The Prosecutor General's Office has recently been more active in its trafficking-related activities and in collaborating with other state offices. This is evidenced through several recent arrests related to trafficking violations.

IRIS is also participating in the creation of a draft State Action Plan with various state agencies and NGOs. This document will eventually be sent to President for his signature.