



Inside IRIS Georgia

Inside IRIS Georgia is a monthly newsletter published by IRIS Georgia, a USAID contractor implementing the Rule of Law Program in Georgia.

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IRIS public service videos win worldwide acclaim



The Georgian national press has been raving about the IRIS-funded "Know the Law and You Will Be Protected" public service announcement (PSA) for months, and the enthusiasm has just crossed the ocean to the U.S.

The American Advertising Federation and the International Advertising Federation recently honored the ad campaign, produced by IRIS grantee,

Internews, with a Gold ADDY® as the best public service campaign worldwide.

The American Advertising Federation, with more 50,000 members, is the largest trade association in the industry. Its ADDY® awards are the largest and most representative competition in advertising.

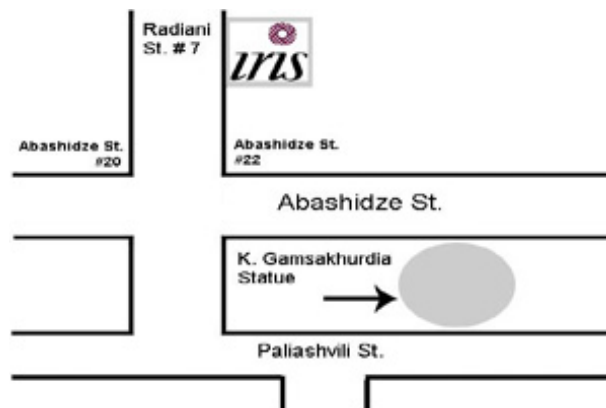
This year was the first time entries were solicited and accepted from entrants outside the U.S., adding to the prestige of the ADDY® for the IRIS campaign.

The award-winning PSA was produced under the direction of Project Director Robyn Jordan

and Chief of Party Gia Getsadze, with the guidance of IRIS consultant Jerry Hunnicutt, who accepted the ADDY® trophy on IRIS's behalf in Los Angeles.

Internews's Zurab Khrikadze and David Makaridze were the video producers. Local research has shown the announcements are very effective in advancing rule of law issues throughout the country. Internews is currently working on a follow-up campaign, scheduled to run this autumn. The videos can be viewed online on the Internews Web site at www.internews.org/ge/eng/psa/

IRIS Georgia moving into a new office



Beginning from July 7, 2003, IRIS Georgia will be located on Radiani Street in Vake district (see the map). Here's the full contact information:

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Featuring IRIS grantee

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)



GYLA members providing free legal advice

GYLA's founders established the organization in order to improve the legal profession in Georgia. GYLA's activities are designed to meet the following goals:

1. Raising public awareness and establishment of the Rule of Law, and
2. Provision of legal aid and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Within the framework of the public awareness campaign, GYLA organizes town hall meetings to promote human rights, make freedom of

information-related laws more widely applicable and accessible to the population, and raise public confidence in judicial processes. GYLA is campaigning for equality and non-discrimination practices, in particular, in gender, nationality and religion. GYLA conducts training for public information officers, judges and other judicial officers, NGOs and media representatives.

GYLA publishes and disseminates leaflets, newspaper inserts, handbooks and other materials on human rights protection and on freedom of information provisions.

GYLA offices in Tbilisi, Gori, Rustavi, Dusheti, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti, and Telavi provide free legal aid service in the cities and nearby villages. Since 2001, under the Rule of Law Project, it has provided over 30,000 consultations and represented citizens in courts and administrative agencies on 237 cases.

GYLA carries out strategic litigation for public interests at the Constitutional Court of Georgia and at the European Court of Human Rights. GYLA works for the protection of human rights and for the promotion of international law and practice in everyday litigation.

Ensuring access to public information



Michael Farbman and Lasha Zhvania at the FOI Office opening

"A public agency shall designate a public servant who will be responsible for ensuring access to public information."

Article 36, The General Administrative Code of Georgia

Access to public information is an important element of a democratic society. The General Administrative Code of Georgia provides the mechanisms for access to public information, and one such mechanism is the requirement imposed on public agencies to

designate an individual to ensure access to public information. To facilitate efforts of public agencies in creating respective Freedom of Information (FOI) offices, IRIS Georgia has provided several public agencies with computer equipment and furniture necessary for normal functioning.

IRIS Georgia has already donated equipment and furniture to FOI offices in the Ministry of Justice and municipal offices in Rustavi. Recently IRIS helped to open the third FOI office at the Ministry of Finance. The office was

opened on June 19 by Deputy Minister of Finance Lasha Zhvania and USAID/Georgia Mission Director Michael Farbman. In his opening speech, Mr. Farbman noted that the donor community has faced disappointments in the pace and progress of reforms in several fields of assistance. However, USAID is proud of the successes in the process of implementing the General Administrative Code of Georgia.

Conference on MP immunity



On June 21, 2003 IRIS Georgia, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs, Legitimacy and Administrative Reforms, held a conference in Tbilisi on the legal immunity of Members of Parliament (MPs). The aim of the conference was to trigger a dialogue and exchange of ideas among various political groups on

immunity. Among the participants of the conference were MPs, government officials, the Public Defender, and NGO representatives. USAID Mission Director Michael Farbman opened the conference. The conference received considerable coverage in the media, including the majority of independent TV stations and Georgian Radio.

Participants of the conference discussed the purpose and role of MP immunity in a democratic society, its positive and negative sides, and draft

amendments to the Constitution that aim to limit the degree of immunity MPs currently enjoy. The participants were unanimous in their opinion that MPs generally need immunity, but they held different views as to the scope and degree of such immunity. For instance, some participants stated that the immunity should not apply to grave and particularly grave crimes and that Parliament's consent should not be required to prosecute an MP who commits such a crime. Meanwhile, others believed that even though

an MP's detention or arrest in the act should not require Parliament's consent, the arrested or detained MP should be released immediately if Parliament demands it. Another suggestion was that immunity should protect MPs only from detention and arrest, but not from prosecution, search, interrogation, etc.

By and large, the conference was successful in reaching its goal – initiating constructive discussion on MP immunity among various political groups.

Other news

“People and the Constitution” Olympiad



Joni Khetsuriani awards winners of the Olympiad

On June 27, 2003 the Constitutional Court of Georgia held a ceremony to recognize the winners of the 6th annual legal Olympiad – “People and the Constitution,” jointly sponsored by IRIS Georgia and the American Bar Association.

The Olympiad is organized for university and school students. 90 five-member teams from 27 regions and cities of Georgia participated in the Olympiad. A six-member committee, consisting of the judges of the court, prominent lawyers and Members of Parliament, challenged participants in their legal knowledge of the Georgian Constitution and legislation.

IRIS Georgia awarded all 34 finalists with its publications. Different prizes were also provided by ABA, GTZ,

the Parliament of Georgia, the Supreme Court of Georgia, Airzena Air Company, Georgian International Oil Company, Aldagi Insurance Company and the Constitutional Court itself.

In his opening speech, Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Mr. Joni Khetsuriani emphasized the importance of the Olympiad for the legal students and generally for the legal education and thanked IRIS for its support.

Introducing IRIS Georgia staff

Nona Tsotsoria, Deputy Chief of Party



Nona Tsotsoria

Nona has worked with USAID legal programs in Georgia since 1999. Her primary responsibilities with IRIS Georgia are assisting the Chief of Party in managing the office and maintaining relations with partner organizations. She also works on legislative drafting and implementation projects, organizes workshops and

conferences and drafts research papers.

Nona has a law degree from Tbilisi State University. She has previously worked as an Assistant to the Judge at the Constitutional Court of Georgia, a Teacher of Law at Tbilisi State University, and an attorney in private practice. Nona has been a

long-time member of Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, serving as a Board Member and Legal Consultant.

A native Georgian, Nona speaks fluent Russian and English.

IRIS Georgia's calendar of events – July 2003

Date	Events
July 1	Nomination of winners of UNAG competition on best FOI body (through July 7)
July 3	GYLA town hall meeting with the representative of Ozurgeti city council
July 4	GYLA town hall meeting in Kharagauli city council
July 5	JTC training for judges in Administrative Law
July 6	JTC training for judges in Administrative Law
July 8	GYLA town hall meeting in Tetrtskharo region
July 10	GYLA town hall meeting in Vani region, village Sulori
July 14	UNAG seminar for Gori/Skra targeted institutions (through July 18) UNAG seminar for Gardabani/Rustavi targeted institutions (through July 18)
July 15	GYLA town hall meeting involving administrative agencies and NGO representatives
July 17	GYLA town hall meeting in Gori involving reps of administrative and law enforcement agencies, NGOs and the media Liberty Institute's roundtable discussion
July 19	JTC training for judges in Administrative Law
July 20	JTC training for judges in Administrative Law
July 25	Liberty Institute press club session
July 29	GYLA town hall meeting in Gardabani
July 30	GYLA Town hall meeting in Ureki Internews documentary <i>Guardhouses in the Army</i> airs on Rustavi 2 TV channel

Editorial Policy

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