



# 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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## Coming soon – IRIS's public awareness posters



Beginning at the end of summer, the streets of Tbilisi will be plastered with billboards and posters designed to educate citizens about their statutory rights. The

campaign is a part of IRIS Georgia's public awareness effort that aims to communicate to the citizens of Georgia their rights under reformed laws, how to exercise those rights and how to respond when established rights are violated by the government.

The billboards and posters will be based on the public service announcements that have been regularly aired on a number of

central and regional TV channels. Breaking the routine of pre-election campaigns, the billboards and posters will deliver clear and powerful messages to the audience about a variety of issues, including the right to silence, pre-detention torture, freedom of religion and ethnic minorities.

There will be seven types of billboards/posters placed in 93 locations in Tbilisi, with 28 in Kutaisi and 13 in Poti.

## Cartoon characters speak out for FOI

The United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) produced attention-grabbing posters that are designed to educate public agencies and citizens about provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) chapter of the General Administrative Code of Georgia. Produced within the framework of the IRIS-funded project, Implementation of FOI Provisions of the General Administrative Code in Public Agencies, the posters feature popular funny characters from the

Chveni Ezo (Our Yard) cartoon series of the TV channel Rustavi 2.

UNAG produced three posters on the following topics: (1) the right to request public information, (2) the requirement for public agencies to submit annual public information reports to the President and the Parliament, and (3) openness of public agency meetings. Each poster is printed in 300 copies and distributed to public agencies, international and local NGOs and the media in target cities and villages,

including Tbilisi.

For more information about the project, please contact UNAG at:

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## **Featuring IRIS grantee Liberty Institute**



*Presentation of Liberty  
Institute's publications*

Under IRIS Georgia's Rule of Law Project, Liberty Institute is implementing activities directed at raising public awareness about civil rights and liberties, as well as fact-finding activities revealing human rights violations throughout the country.

Liberty institute is active both in the capital and the regions. Its regional network covers Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Kutaisi, Telavi, and it recently opened offices in Poti and Rustavi. Dozens of victims of human rights violations approach Liberty Institute's offices in

regions seeking qualified assistance each month. The office in Akhaltsikhe prepared the first class action suit in 2002. Whenever necessary, victims of violations are transferred to partner organizations – the Georgian Young Lawyers Association and Article 42 – for further legal assistance. Regional staff work closely with the local community through newsletter delivery, visits to various interest groups and invitations to roundtable discussions.

Liberty Institute's public awareness campaign organizes regular Press

Club sessions in Tbilisi. Press Club sessions are a good venue for journalists and NGO representatives to discuss with public officials such controversial issues as rights of conscripts, freedom of speech and religion, and police brutality.

In addition to specific publications, Liberty Institute produces a monthly newsletter, which is receiving increasing public acclaim due to its responsiveness to highly problematic issues in society. Liberty Institute's publications were presented in an annual book fair June 11-15, 2003.

## **Protection of Personal Data**



Adoption of the General Administrative Code of Georgia, and specifically the Freedom of Information chapter, gave birth to a new legal concept in Georgia. This concept is the legal definition of personal data and the mechanisms of its protection.

The General Administrative Code provides for the protection of one of the major civil rights – the right to privacy, guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia. The Code laid down

general rules for the protection of personal data, and accompanying legislation is the next step. IRIS Georgia has been working closely with the Georgian State Department of Statistics, which has prepared a draft Law on Personal Data, and a formed a respective working group. In its initial work, IRIS Georgia compared international experience in legal drafting, implementation of the adopted laws in this field, and recent trends in personal data protection

with the draft law submitted by the Department of Statistics and Georgian legislation in regard to personal data. The research, including some recommendations, has been submitted to the Department of Statistics and the working group. In the second stage of cooperation, IRIS Georgia prepared an alternative version of the draft Law on Personal Data Protection, which is currently being finalized and will also be submitted for review to the Department of Statistics and the working group.

## Promoting tolerance through TV documentaries

Georgia is home to various ethnicities and religions. Throughout its history, Georgia has welcomed different peoples and their religions with one word: tolerance. Even during the communist era, faith was an integral part of Georgian life. Orthodox Christianity, a pillar of Georgian culture, has made people who practice all religions feel safe and free here.

Recently, though, something has changed, changed enough to add the prefix "in" to "tolerance": one small prefix but a giant leap in behavior.

Georgia has historically had minor clashes on religious grounds, but only in modern times has religious violence reached its peak. Religious extremist groups act in the name of Georgian Orthodoxy and beat up non-Orthodox believers, destroying their property and burning their religious literature.

To address these recent events, Internews Georgia produced a 30-minute documentary, "Verge," one of 10 documentaries produced under its IRIS grant. The film portrays religious intolerance, aspects of discrimination,

and attacks on religious groups and citizens with different faiths. The film tries to answer how tolerance grew into intolerance, and shows the dangers of a lack of respect for others' beliefs. Also included are interviews with representatives of the Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and many other faiths as well as with the Public Defender and several politicians.

The TV channel Rustavi 2 broadcast the film in March. Copies with English subtitles are available at the IRIS Georgia office.



### Other news

## Administrative Law workshop for public officials



On May 21, 2003 IRIS Georgia held a workshop on Administrative Law for public officials. During the workshop, 18 representatives from the Ministry of Justice (and its Department for the Enforcement of Judgments), the Ministry

of Labor, Health and Social Security, the Common State Fund for Social Insurance of Georgia, and Tbilisi State University discussed a variety of issues relating to Administrative Law, such as public information and the procedure for its release, the definition of an administrative act, administrative proceedings with regard to administrative claims, and public registry.

The discussion topics were selected based on

the interests of participants and the problems that they face in their daily work.

**Introducing IRIS Georgia staff**

**Diana Rutherford**



*Diana Rutherford*

Diana works primarily in College Park, and is responsible for managing the financial and logistical operations of the project from the U.S. side, as well as the annual survey report. Diana coordinates arrangements with our foreign consultants and

operations of our contracts with our U.S. partners. She has a dual bachelor degree in Communication and International Affairs from the University of New Hampshire, and a Master of International Relations from American University.

She has been at the IRIS Center since 1998.

A month ago Diana had a baby girl, Christina Rose Rutherford. IRIS Georgia would like to wish her good health and happiness with her family.

**IRIS Georgia calendar of events – June 2003**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Events</b>
June 1	JTC's workshop in Bakuriani for Appellate and Supreme Court judges regarding court practice with respect to Administrative Law
June 4	GYLA's workshop on children's rights in Kutaisi
June 6	GYLA's meeting with population and NGO reps at Kutaisi NGO House GYLA's workshop for FOIA Officers of Imereti Region
June 7	JTC's training of judges in Administrative Law GYLA's workshop for FOIA Officers of Imereti Region
June 8	JTC's training of judges in Administrative Law GYLA's workshop for FOIA Officers of Imereti Region
June 9	GYLA's meeting with Oni Sakrebulo reps on the Administrative Code GYLA's meeting with school teachers of Oni about women's rights
June 11	Liberty Institute's round table in Kutaisi GYLA's meeting with Sakrebulo reps in Kaspi GYLA's meeting with Sakrebulo reps in Ozurgeti
June 14	GYLA's round table on Criminal Procedures in Tbilisi
June 18	UNAG's evaluation and seminar in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki
June 19	UNAG's evaluation and seminar in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki
June 20	UNAG's evaluation and seminar in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki GYLA's meeting with Sakrebulo reps in Khashuri GYLA's meeting with Sakrebulo reps in Kaspi
June 21	IRIS Georgia's constitutional workshop on MP immunity JTC's training of judges in Administrative Law
June 22	GYLA's meeting with NGOs in Telavi JTC's training of judges in Administrative Law
June 24	GYLA's meeting with NGOs in Telavi
June 26	Liberty Institute's Press Club Session in Tbilisi
June 27	GYLA's round table for judges and lawyers about the Administrative Code in Rustavi GYLA's meeting with Sakrebulo reps in Khashuri
June 28	GYLA's round table on women's rights in Tbilisi GYLA's workshop on the civil society and NGOs in anticorruption activities in Kutaisi
June 30	Internews' 5th documentary on the right to live in healthy environment aired on Rustavi 2 TV channel

**Editorial Policy**

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