



Inside IRIS Georgia

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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.

IRIS Georgia has a new Chief of Party



Nona Tsotsoria

IRIS appointed a new Chief of Party (COP) to its

Georgia field office. Former COP Gia Getsadze, who resigned from the position to run as an independent candidate in the parliamentary elections, was succeeded by his deputy Nona Tsotsoria, who was officially approved as IRIS Georgia's new Chief of

Party effective July 21, 2003.

IRIS Georgia wishes Gia Getsadze success in his endeavor to make a difference as a member of parliament and welcomes Nona Tsotsoria to her new position.

Reaching out to the public through billboards



At a busy intersection, IRIS's billboard promotes ethnic equality.

At the end of August, IRIS Georgia launched the first stage of its outdoor billboard campaign. Billboards measuring 18 square meters that address topics like illegal search, the right to silence, equality, and the right to counsel appeared

in 30 locations in Tbilisi, four in Kutaisi and two in Poti.

The first stage of the campaign will last for one month. It will later be supplemented by the second stage, in which the remaining three billboards on freedom from torture, religious equality, and police bribery will appear in an additional 56 locations in various target cities.

The billboards are based on the series of IRIS-funded public service announcements (PSAs) "Know the Law and You'll

Be Protected." The PSAs were launched on Georgian TV channels in September 2002 and quickly gained popularity among viewers. In June 2003, the American Advertising Federation and the International Advertising Federation honored the IRIS-funded PSA campaign with a Gold ADDY® award as the best public service campaign worldwide.

Featuring IRIS grantee
Article 42 of the Constitution



Article 42's lawyers in action

Article 42 of the Constitution, a Georgian NGO, has been implementing the IRIS-funded project "Free Legal Service at the District Court of Tbilisi" since May 2002. Under the project, six qualified lawyers provide free service to socially vulnerable appellants and defendants in criminal cases. The lawyers were selected from 86 applicants based on tests and interviews, which guarantee their high qualification and quality of service. The project enables socially vulnerable citizens to avail themselves of qualified legal service at the District Court and, in some cases,

at the Supreme Court. To ensure successful implementation of the project, project offices were set up in the building of the District Court and in a nearby private building, which makes relations with beneficiaries and the Court more open, responsive and effective.

The project team regularly interacts with print and electronic press. Throughout implementation of the project, legal services were provided to 89 people. The project team received a total of 151 applications. They are currently handling 33 criminal cases.

Under the project, Article 42 of the Constitution published a brochure titled *Your Rights in the Appellate Court*. The purpose of the brochure is to familiarize prisoners with basic legal safeguards guaranteed by the law and the mechanisms for their effective application. The brochure also describes particularities of case management at appellate courts.

During the project, Article 42 of the Constitution successfully handled 24 criminal cases, including 3 cases where defendants were acquitted and released.

Workshop on licensing issues



Participants of AYEG's workshop

On August 14-20, the Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG), with the support of IRIS Georgia, held a workshop to design a guidebook that will help business people obtain licenses and permits for the manufacturing of food and tobacco products. Participants of the workshop included experts of AYEG and IRIS Georgia and representatives from licensing administrative agencies.

The participants received detailed information regarding the legislation

regulating this field and the rules of public and common administrative proceedings, as established by the General Administrative Code. These rules serve as the groundwork for issuing licenses/permits. The agencies represented at the workshop received recommendations and reached an agreement regarding procedures and terms for issuing licenses/permits.

The participants designed the guide titled *How to Obtain a License or Permit for the Manufacturing of Food*

and Tobacco Products, which outlines all the procedures that applicants for such license/permit process should go through.

The guide also includes sample application forms for a license/permit, administrative lawsuit and complaint, and others, which will significantly help business people and licensing agencies in their activities.

Freedom of media discussed at Liberty Institute's Press Club Session



Press Club Session brought together media stakeholders

On August 13, 2003 IRIS grantee Liberty Institute organized a Press Club Session regarding the role of the media and the Judiciary in the pre-election period. The session addressed the recent trend of restraining free media through judicial mechanisms, specifically the civil case of Akaki Chkhaidze, the Head of

the Railway Department of Georgia, against Rustavi 2's *60 Minutes* show. Mr. Chkhaidze brought civil action against TV channel Rustavi 2, demanding a refutation of all statements made in the show against him and 1 million lari in moral damages. In its decision of August 11, 2003, the District Court of Tbilisi ruled against Rustavi 2 and fully satisfied Mr. Chkhaidze's claim. It is noteworthy that *60 Minutes* was given an award by International Reporters Editors for the same program for which the District Court imposed 1 million Lari in damages.

Rustavi 2 plans to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of Georgia.

In addition to the *60 Minutes* case, participants of the session discussed the case against newspaper *Batumlebi* and the actions of the Governor of Imereti. The participants signed a statement outlining negative developments in the area, including alleged legal violations that led to the abovementioned court decisions. The statement will be published in the print media. NGO and media representatives

agreed to pursue common action against further development of this trend by speaking out about their concerns and making use of other forms of civic activism. Participants will file complaints to initiate disciplinary proceedings against the judges that were involved in the decision in the case of Akaki Chkhaidze vs. *60 Minutes* and on the case against *Batumelebi*.

Other news

IRIS grantee helps to drop undemocratic amendments

On June 6, 2003 the Georgian Parliament passed proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Georgia. The amendments significantly changed the definition of defamation and imposed severe penalties for this offense. Moreover, the amendments turned insult into a criminal offense in contrast to a well-established practice in democratic states, where legal remedies from insulting statements are secured through civil procedures. The scope of the amendments is very broad and if successfully

enforced, their negative impact will be significant. Drafters of the amendments managed to pass them through the first hearing irrespective of the negative opinion of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament.

The first hearing of the amendments went very quietly and without any publicity in the Parliament, which was involved in heated discussions on highly controversial issues. Only owing to Liberty Institute's efforts and its Press Club Session held on July 25, 2003, the media was informed of the threats arising from the passage

of the amendments. The Press Club Session served as an effective forum for mobilizing media against the proposed amendments and formulating a coordinated plan of action. There was unanimous consent among the participants that the law would literally kill free media in Georgia. As a first step, media representatives signed a letter to the Chair of the Parliament and Members of the Bureau of the Parliaments, which outlined deficiencies of the draft amendments and presented the concerns of the media.

The letter was followed by a meeting with the Chair of the Parliament, Nino Burdjanadze, drafter of the amendments, Revaz Arveladze, and several MPs on July 30, 2003. The meeting was attended by representatives of various media outlets, NGOs and the donor community, including IRIS Georgia.

Heated discussion of the amendments convinced R. Arveladze to withdraw his legislative initiative, which means that there will be no second hearing over the proposed amendments.

Introducing IRIS Georgia staff

Dato Usupashvili, Senior Legal and Policy Advisor



Dato Usupashvili

Dato Usupashvili advises the Chief of Party and the Deputy Chief of Party on policy issues and implements several projects in the area of constitutional law. He has been with the USAID Rule of Law program since 1998.

Mr. Usupashvili has a law degree from Tbilisi State University and a MA in

international development policy from Duke University.

Starting from his early university years, Mr. Usupashvili was actively involved in the legal affairs of Georgia. He has served in high-level government positions and in the NGO sector, including as a member of the Central Election Commission and

chairman of its legal department, Chief Legal Advisor to the President of Georgia, Chairman of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association of Georgia, and Executive Secretary of the Anti-corruption Working Group of the President of Georgia.

A native Georgian, Mr. Usupashvili speaks fluent Russian and English.

IRIS Georgia's calendar of events – September 2003

Date	Events
Sept 1, 2	GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to IDP community GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to village Zedghuleti, Gori region
Sept 5, 8	GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to Tskhemisxidi GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to Tetricklebi
Sept 9	IRIS's legal aid expert Joe Dailing arrives in Tbilisi GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to village Akhalsopeli, Kareli region
Sept 10	UNAG's conference in Bakuriani (through Sept 12) GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visits to Tetrtskharo region, Kazbegi and Akhmeta
Sept 11	GYLA's town hall meeting in Ozurgeti (through Sept 18) GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visits to village Ali, Khashuri region, and Dvabzu
Sept 12	GYLA's town hall meeting in village Akhagori, Gardabani region GYLA's town hall meeting in Telavi on human rights for teachers and students
Sept 13	AYEG's workshop in Bakuriani on the issues of licensing (through Sept 18)
Sept 15	Liberty Institute's roundtable discussion in Gori GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visits to IDP community and Mtsipitri
Sept 16	GYLA's mobile legal aid in Bolnisi region (through Sept 19) GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to village Khivle, Kaspi region
Sept 17	GYLA's town hall meeting in Tianeti GYLA's roundtable discussion on trafficking for Gori police officers
Sept 18, 19	GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to Bakhvi GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visits to Kvakhchiri, village Asureti and Latankuri
Sept 22, 23	GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to village Tamarisi, Marneuli region GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to Akhalsopeli
Sept 24	GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visits to village Khikhani, Marneuli region, and Arguni
Sept 25	GYLA's town hall meeting in Telavi on human rights for doctors GYLA's roundtable discussion in Telavi for NGOs and media on freedom of speech Liberty Institute's Press Club Session in Tbilisi
Sept 26	GYLA's town hall meeting in village Nagebi, Gardabani region GYLA's mobile legal aid clinic visit to Tskaltubo
Sept 29	Internews's documentary on trafficking aired on Rustavi 2 TV channel GYLA's mobile legal aid in Dusheti region (through Sept 30)

Editorial Policy

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