

**Rule of Law Initiative / Global Human Rights Training and Support
The RIGHTS Consortium**

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Consortium Members: Freedom House (prime partner), the American Bar Association (ABA), and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

Sixteenth Interim Narrative Report

Reporting Period: January 1 to March 30, 2003

I. Executive Summary

On March 9, 1999, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a grant in the amount of \$4,000,000 to Freedom House to provide support for a global program in rule of law. On September 27, 2000, USAID raised the funding ceiling to \$12,000,000. Freedom House acts as the prime recipient for the RIGHTS Consortium, which includes Freedom House (FH), the American Bar Association (ABA) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

The RIGHTS Consortium supports the transition to and consolidation of democratic regimes throughout the world by supporting and strengthening the rule of law and human rights. Specifically, RIGHTS Consortium activities help USAID achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase legal protections for human rights and gender equity that conform to international standards;
2. Establish judicial, legal, and regulatory frameworks that support democratic institutions as well as market-based economies;
3. Support effective and fair justice sector institutions, including the judiciary, prosecution, legal defenders, and civilian police;
4. Increase equitable access to justice and the skills and knowledge necessary to use the justice system effectively; and
5. Establish technical excellence and "state of the art" sustainable activities in the field of rule of law and human rights.

During the five-year grant period, USAID supports the RIGHTS Consortium in two types of programming: (1) core activities which improve technical aspects and the sustainability of rule of law and human rights programs (through the Leader Cooperative Agreement), and (2) longer-term, more comprehensive rule of law and human rights development activities that provide technical assistance and training (through Associate Awards). Initial core funding from the

Democracy and Governance office provides \$500,000 for rapid response initiatives, \$500,000 for technical excellence and “state of the art” sustainable activities, and \$250,000 for overall Consortium management and ongoing operating costs for each of the last four years. As of March 30, 2003, USAID obligated funds to the RIGHTS Consortium under the Leader Grant totaled \$ 5,806,165.

This narrative report reviews the activity carried out during the sixteenth interim reporting period of January 1 – March 30, 2003.

II. Program Activities

During the sixteenth quarter, the RIGHTS Consortium continued to develop and implement activities supporting the rule of law and human rights through its Leader agreement and Associate Award agreements. Under the technical leadership component of the Leader grant, the Consortium employed the **CEDAW Assessment Tool** (available on the RIGHTS Consortium website) in three country assessments having impact on program design decisions and international compliance review, developed a training module on the **ICCPR Index**, and completed and tested the **Human Rights Defenders Assessment Tool**. Under this component, NDI also completed drafts of its first two **Rule of Law Series** papers, and began development of the third. In addition, Freedom House providing training and credentials for human rights defenders to attend the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva to increase the presence of human rights defenders in international fora.

Under its Leader grant, the Consortium implemented activities in the following projects:

- **Strengthening Rule of Law and Human Rights in Algeria (Freedom House, ABA-Africa, International Center for Journalists)**
- **East Timor Human Rights Support Program (Freedom House, Coalition for International Justice)**
- **Environmental Governance in China (ABA-Asia)**
- **Mexico Human Rights Defenders Project (Freedom House)**
- **Russian Journalist Program (Freedom House)**

and utilized the **Rapid Response reserve fund** to address rapidly developing criminal justice reform initiatives in **Mexico** and in **India**.

Through its Associate Awards, the Consortium implemented activities in the following projects:

- **Morocco: Promoting Ethics in Government (NDI)**
- **Mediation in Mexico (ABA-Latin America, Freedom House)**
- **Human Rights Promotion in Morocco (Freedom House)**
- **Human Rights Defenders Projects in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Freedom House)**

Projects supported through the Leader are described in the following sections of this report. The Consortium submitted quarterly narratives for the projects funded through associate awards under separate cover.

A. TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITIES IN RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Technical Leadership under the RIGHTS Consortium is designed to improve long-term strategic planning of rule of law and human rights assistance with the aim of creating more effective and sustainable programming. During the sixteenth quarter, the RIGHTS Consortium used all three of its new assessment tools to compile facts and analysis, design programs, and recommend reforms in a number of countries, including Serbia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Mexico. As well the ICCPR Index served as the basis of new training curriculum and resources for further impact on human rights protections. Three out of four of the discussion papers on rule of law topics are currently being developed for use by rule of law reformers and assistance providers. In addition, the RIGHTS Consortium providing training and credentials for human rights defenders to participate in the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

1. Technical Leadership Tools

a. CEDAW Assessment Tool

The CEDAW Assessment project is ongoing in Serbia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. In all three countries, the initial research and drafting stages of the report are complete. The reports generate a wealth of information for the NGO community, but CEELI is also learning a great deal about how to run the CEDAW Assessment more effectively. Eventually, this information will be recorded in an implementation handbook to assist other NGOs in utilizing the CEDAW Assessment Tool.

The Serbia CEDAW Assessment report will be published by June 2003. However, the report required edits due to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the creation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on February 4, 2003. In Georgia, the CEDAW Assessment process continues to move forward. A rough draft is complete, and CEELI will begin editing the document. NGOs in Georgia focused on women's advocacy are eagerly awaiting the final report, and they will be central figures in vetting the report before it is distributed. The Georgia report should be finalized by the end of summer 2003.

The CEDAW Assessment process in Kazakhstan is also in the editing stages. This report should be available by fall 2003. CEELI is also preparing to conduct the CEDAW Assessment in Russia in fall 2003.

b. ICCPR Index

After the December 2002 working group meeting on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Legal Implementation Index, ABA/CEELI refined the tool based on the feedback received at that meeting. While conducting the additional research to complete the Index, it was brought to ABA/CEELI's attention that the United Nations Human Rights Committee is issuing General Comments on Article 2 of the ICCPR. These Comments could have a significant impact on the obligations of States Parties to the treaty. In light of this information, ABA/CEELI has chosen to postpone release of the Index. The Human Rights

Committee is scheduled to issue its Comments this month, and ABA/CEELI will update the Index accordingly. The Index will be submitted to USAID and released to the public once these updates have been made.

ABA/CEELI finalized its teaching module for a human rights course based on its ICCPR research and piloted the course with Kosovar lawyers. The CEELI Institute in Prague hopes to schedule additional sessions over the course of the next year.

c. Human Rights Defender Assessment Tool

Freedom House completed its human rights defender assessment instrument, and conducted a first pilot testing of the tool in Mexico in February. (See section B.4. for a description of the Mexico pilot test.) The Human Rights Defender Assessment tool served as a strategic guide for program design as well as a practical tool for implementing an assessment. The assessment team (which included one of the drafters, the Director of the RIGHTS Consortium, and a country expert) made concrete observations on the methodology and a few modifications that will appropriately guide future users in the sensitive context in which human rights defenders work as well as important interviewing considerations. An assessment report and the revised tool will be available next quarter, and the team will be available to discuss its results with USAID and the State Department.

2. Rule of Law Series Discussion Papers

Under the technical leadership component of the RIGHTS Consortium, NDI is developing a series of publications to help provide political actors with practical comparative information on selected rule of law issues, starting with an initial series of four publications. This quarter the Institute completed the initial text of the first publication in collaboration with an international expert on ombudsman offices, and completed a draft of the second publication. The Institute also began research on the third paper in the series.

This quarter NDI completed the initial text for the first publication in the series. This first paper provides comparative information on global trends in the structure and jurisdiction of Ombudsman offices and best practices for using these offices to not only protect individual rights, but to promote systemic changes in administrative rules and procedures and/or remedial legislation. The paper looks specifically at the effectiveness of Ombudsman offices in handling cases that are not viewed as within the traditional purview of Ombudsman (e.g. human rights abuses, government corruption and environmental issues), and makes note of the structures/mechanisms within Ombudsman offices that make some more effective in these areas than others. During the current quarter the Institute collaborated with Dr. Victor Ayeni, Deputy Director in Management and Training for the Commonwealth Secretariat, on the text of this initial publication. This publication is based largely on primary research conducted by NDI through a global survey of ombudsman offices as well as the Institute's experience working with the African Ombudsman Association. It is also based on Dr. Ayeni's experience in assisting in the development and reform of ombudsman offices in commonwealth countries. The publication ready document will be sent under separate cover upon completion of formatting and editing.

Additionally, during this quarter the Institute began collaborating with Mr. Ronald West, an international expert on police reform, to supplement NDI's existing in-house expertise in the area, and began developing the second publication, *Independent Oversight of Law Enforcement Agencies and Effective Mechanisms for Establishing Police Accountability*. This paper provides comparative information on the legal and institutional framework that promotes and supports independent oversight of domestic law enforcement agencies and discusses ways in which this framework can encourage police procedures that promote an effective police force and positive/healthy police-citizen relations. The paper explores such issues as: 1) overcoming political hurdles to establishing effective civilian oversight; 2) best practices in establishing the legal and institutional framework for oversight functions (including the strengths and weaknesses of civilian review boards); and 3) effective models of community policing. An initial draft of the paper is nearly complete and will be finalized in the beginning of the next quarter.

In the next quarter NDI will complete editing, publish and distribute the first paper in the research series. The Institute will also complete the second paper in the series and complete research and development of the third paper.

3. Increasing Presence of Human Rights Defenders in the International Arena

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) is designed to be a key forum for the discussion of human rights. Unfortunately, the composition of the Commission is such that major human rights abusers wield increasingly great power on the UNCHR and have substantially eroded its ability to discuss and investigate many of the world's most serious human rights violations. Libya's election to chairman of the 2003 UNCHR cast an even darker shadow over the commission's reputation as a credible international human rights mechanism and its ability to promote universal human rights.

Both in spite of and because of these problems, Freedom House has maintained a strong presence at the UNCHR over the past four years with a primary goal of providing access to this forum for human rights defenders from the countries in which it administers training programs for human rights defenders. Through the Leader Awards technical leadership funds, Freedom House funded two RIGHTS staff members' travel and time in leading the delegation and training the human rights delegates. Through additional matching funding through individual RIGHTS projects and other Freedom House programs, we brought eighteen delegates to Geneva, including three staff members and eleven human rights defenders representing Algeria, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Uzbekistan, and Chechnya. In order to coincide with the agenda items most relevant to Freedom House's work, the Washington DC staff members and foreign delegates attended the third week of the meeting from March 31st- April 4th. (Freedom House's Senior Scholar Adrian Karatnycky and Press Officer Michael Goldfarb attended one week later, joined by Board Member Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and WSJ reporter Claudia Caldeirinha to undertake a separate activity on the Community of Democracies.)

Prior to attending the annual meeting, Freedom House staff in each of the project countries prepared delegates for their presentations in Geneva. During the week at the annual meeting, RIGHTS-DC staff provided training and information to its delegates on how to access and use the UN human rights mechanisms to support their work as human rights defenders. With formal

and informal targeted training sessions, Freedom House provided information, strategies, assistance and feedback for the wide range of activities that occur within the framework of the annual Commission meeting. Our delegates had the opportunity to present information about violations in their countries through panel discussions and meetings with *Special Rapporteurs* (independent experts appointed by the UN to monitor certain themes or specific countries). Emphasis was also placed upon the knowledge and experience to be gained through other UNCHR activities such as: attending plenary sessions, NGO side events and briefing; networking and meeting counterpart organizations and human rights defenders; gathering important documents, resolutions and materials to bring home; and brainstorming on best practices and potential collaboration with other human rights defenders in the Freedom House delegation.

Briefings

On April 3, 2003, Freedom House provided the delegates a chance to present information from their countries on the situation for human rights defenders in our parallel forum: "Shared Experiences? The Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Islamic World". Panelists included four human rights defenders from the two Central Asian and two North Africa countries represented on the delegation. Particularly well attended, the event drew a diverse audience including members of the Algerian government delegation, and the OHCHR Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders.

On April 9, 2003, Freedom House co-sponsored a second roundtable entitled, "Enhancing Democratic Cooperation at the United Nations: Building common purpose among the UN's democracies." Freedom House, in cooperation with the Transnational Radical Party (TRP) and the Open Society Institute's Democracy Coalition Project, used the panel to facilitate the creation of a democracy caucus at the UN, based on the Community of Democracies process. The panel discussion drew close to 100 people. Several ambassadors attended and participated in the discussion that followed the briefing. Panelists included: Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick; The Hon. Marco Pannella, Member of the European Parliament and founder of the TRP; Claudia Caldeirinha, Europe director of the Open Society Institute's Democracy Coalition Project; and Adrian Karatnycky.

Meetings with Special Rapporteurs

Staff and appropriate delegates met with the *Special Rapporteur* on Extra-Judicial Executions (Ms. Asma Jahangir), the *Special Rapporteur* on Torture, (Mr. Theo Van Boven), the *Special Rapporteur* on Freedom of Expression (Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo), the *Special Rapporteur* on Cuba (Christine Chanet), and the Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (Mr. Louis Joinet). In addition to serving as another forum in which to share information and discuss salient human rights concerns, these meetings helped emphasize the importance of credible and systematic documentation and increased delegates' knowledge of using *Special Rapporteurs* as one UN mechanism which can offer recourse, support and continued contact to human rights defenders once they have returned home.

While the tenor of the individual meetings varied, the overall experience was rewarding and useful for both the Freedom House delegates as well as, notably, for the *Special Rapporteurs* and

their staff. The *Special Rapporteur* on Extraordinary, Arbitrary and Summary Execution praised Freedom House for its mission and work, and noted that the comprehensive and detailed portion Algeria chapter of her report to the UN Human Rights Commission was due almost entirely to the information from and collaboration with Algerian human rights defenders on the Freedom House delegation the previous year. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on Torture also commended Freedom House stating that the RIGHTS project's Human Rights Information and Resource Center in Tashkent office was extremely useful for his Special Report on Uzbekistan. (see Associate Award report submitted under separate cover.) Finally, a lively meeting with Mr. Ligabo, the *Special Rapporteur* on Freedom of Expression, led to an exciting opportunity and potential new project to support independent media in Equatorial Guinea. Through Mr. Ligabo, Freedom House staff met with the government delegation of Equatorial Guinea to discuss the possibility of providing technical assistance to a fledgling, under resourced and uneducated media sector.

B. RAPID RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE UNDER THE LEADER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

The Leader Cooperative agreement has allowed for the start-up and implementation of projects addressing new opportunities for reform, and for development assistance projects in non-presence countries. During this quarter, the RIGHTS Consortium carried out strategic rule of law assistance projects in Algeria, China, Mexico, East Timor, and the Baltic States and Russia. In addition, the Consortium implemented two rapid response initiatives in India and in Mexico to support criminal justice reform initiatives.

1. Strengthening Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Algeria

This quarter, Freedom House, ABA-Africa, and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) continued to implement the second phase of their joint program to strengthen human rights and the rule of law in Algeria. Specifically, the Algeria program is designed to: (1) provide comparative information and technical expertise to improve the Algerian justice sector, with an emphasis on legislation that impacts human rights; (2) promote dialogue between the Algerian government and civil society on justice sector reform; (3) strengthen the policy advocacy skills of civil society, particularly of those organizations that work on the issues of justice sector reform and the disappeared; and (4) promote the development of a free and effective media.

Algeria: Freedom House Study Tour on the Issue of Disappearances and Victims' Rights

From March 1 to 19, 2003, Freedom House conducted a study tour to the United States and Bosnia for a diverse group of nine Algerian human rights activists and journalists who work on the issue of disappearances that occurred during Algeria's civil conflict. An estimated 10,000 Algerians remain missing, and to date the Algerian government has not provided any information about their fate, nor has it brought any of the perpetrators to justice. The study tour was designed to (1) provide participants with ideas about how they might obtain information about and justice for the missing; (2) introduce participants to individuals in the United States and Bosnia who might provide assistance in the Algerian context, whether through the provision of technical

assistance or through advocacy; and (3) promote joint efforts on the issue of disappearances by Algerians of diverse political and organizational affiliations.

The participants on the study tour included representatives from “both sides” of the victims’ communities in Algeria (*i.e.*, victims of state security forces and victims of Islamic armed groups), as well as a representative of the National Commission on Human Rights. The participants’ names and affiliations are listed below:

1. Mr. Mohamed Belhaoua, Human Rights Activist, Relizane
2. Ms. Souad Bendjaballah, Member, National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, (*CCNDH - Commission Nationale Consultative de Promotion et de Protection des Droits de l'Homme*) and Professor of Law, Constantine
3. Mr. Adnane Bouchaib Member, SOMOUD (*Des Familles Des Victimes Enlevées Par Les Groupes Islamistes Armes*), Algiers
4. Mr. Redouane Boudjema, Member, Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (*LADDH - Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme*) and Journalist, Algiers
5. Mr. Lazhar Djeziri, Member, Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (*LADDH - Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme*) and Journalist, *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, Algiers
6. Mr. Noureddine Khaled, President, Algerian Society for Psychological Research (*SARP - Societe Algerienne de Recherche en Psychologie*), Algiers
7. Mr. Ali Merabet, President, Association SOMOUD (*Des Familles Des Victimes Enlevées Par Les Groupes Islamistes Armes*), Algiers
8. Ms. Safia Sbahi Fahassi, Member, National Association of Families of the Disappeared (*ANFD - Association Nationale des Familles des Disparu*), El Harrach Algiers
9. Ms. Zahia Yacoub, Executive Board Member, Association Djazairouna, Blida

The U.S. portion of the study tour, which took place from March 1 to 12, consisted of briefings and training sessions with a host of human rights organizations and NGOs in both Washington, D.C. and New York City. Through these meetings, participants learned about the range of political, legal, and scientific approaches that have been employed to resolve the issue of disappearances in other countries. On March 12 participants departed for the Bosnia portion of the study tour, which served as an intensive case study of how the issue of the missing was treated in a post-conflict situation.

Meetings during the U.S. portion of the study tour usually lasted between one and two hours and involved an introduction and overview by the speaker, followed by questions and discussion.

Participants were particularly engaged at a day-long seminar at the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) in New York, where ICTJ's in-house experts provided information about the array of transitional justice mechanisms (e.g., truth commissions, international criminal tribunals) that have been established in the wake of other conflicts. Particular emphasis was placed on practical steps Algerians can take immediately to promote resolution of the issue of disappearances in their own country, such as systematically documenting all available information about specific cases. Other meetings that participants found especially useful were: (1) a meeting at the National Security Archive, which addressed how the U.S. Freedom of Information Act can be used to obtain information about human rights abuses in other countries; (2) a meeting with the Argentinian Forensic Anthropology Team, which focused on techniques for the exhumation and identification of bodies; and (3) a meeting with Patrick Ball of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which addressed human rights documentation systems.

Upon completion of the briefings and training sessions in the United States, participants traveled to Bosnia. Freedom House consultant Asta Zinbo, Director of Civil Society Initiatives at the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), coordinated this portion of the program. Participants had the opportunity to learn how the ICMP is working to bring resolution to the families of those missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, including visiting the ICMP Identification Coordination Center and observing how the ICMP uses DNA technology to match victims of the conflict with bodies that have been recovered from mass graves.

Another major component of the Bosnia portion of the program was introducing participants to various family organizations in Bosnia who represent different sides of the conflict, but have been able to find some common ground to work together in search of information about victims. One example of such a meeting was with the Bosniak Union of Families, which is composed of 12 Bosniak Associations of Families of Missing Persons, and fights for the rights of all families of captured and missing persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina by exerting pressure on all relevant institutions. Participants also met with Croatian and Republic of Srpska Family Associations. After meeting with individuals who have suffered the loss of many family members but continue to work tirelessly on the issue of the missing, participants found great encouragement to press on with their work. At the conclusion of the week's activities in Bosnia, the ICMP hosted a roundtable discussion entitled, "The Role of Media in Addressing the Missing Persons Issue," which included Algerian journalists from the study tour, as well as several Bosnia journalists who cover the topic.

Through conversations with participants and their written evaluations of the program, Freedom House has discerned possible program impact in several areas. First, several participants indicated that as a result of the program, they would initiate and/or increase cooperation with other organizations, including organizations from the "other side." For example, a representative of the LADDH, which advocates for victims taken by state security forces, said he would try to work with SOMOUD and Djaizarouna, which focus on victims taken by Islamic armed groups, to organize a national conference on the issue of disappearances. Similarly, a representative of SOMOUD indicated that because of the study tour, he would work with SARP, an organization that provides psychological counseling to victims of terrorism, and attempt to persuade the

representative of the governmental human rights commission on the study tour of the importance of “integrating the issue of missing individuals in the process of national reconciliation.”

Next, participants indicated that through the study tour, they made valuable contacts that they would utilize upon their return to Algeria. For example, one participant said that he would like to invite Priscilla Hayner of the ICTJ to come to Algeria to provide further information about truth commissions. Another participant said that as a journalist, he would “use e-mail to interview and contact the numerous people I met so they can weigh in on the debate in Algeria, rendering it more comprehensive.” Possible future collaboration also was established at the Fund for Global Human Rights, a grantmaking organization that seeks to expand the resources available to on-the-ground human rights groups throughout the world. Executive Director Regan Ralph offered information about the organization’s interest in expanding funding to include North African countries and encouraged participants to submit additional information about their organizations’ activities.”

Finally, participants offered numerous examples of how they would use the information imparted in the study tour in their own work. For example, one participant said that because of the seminar at the ICTJ, she would “work on the publication of documents on the testimonies of the families of victims of terrorism to create public awareness and resistance and to raise the national and international awareness of the plight of victims’ families.” After meeting with his Bosnian counterparts, one of the journalist participants remarked that the experience “will help me better cover everything relating to missing persons. I will restate my priorities as a result of this Bosnia experience in order to exert more pressure on all parties involved in this conflict to treat the issue of missing individuals as an urgent problem.

Algeria: Promotion of a Free and Effective Media

Freedom House, ABA-Africa, and ICFJ are implementing a series of coordinated activities to increase the freedom, professionalism, and quality of the Algerian print media.

Comparative Assessment of Algerian Defamation Laws

In comparison to many other countries in the Arab world, the Algerian print press is vibrant and highly developed. There are more than 30 independent daily newspapers, and Algerian journalists regularly criticize the government and call for increased democracy and respect for human rights. In June 2001, however, the Algerian Parliament adopted amendments to the Algerian penal code that provide for prison terms for journalists who insult the President, Parliament, the army, or other constitutional body. The amendments also provide for exceedingly high fines for publishers whose newspapers print such insults.

To try to mitigate the effects of the penal code amendments, ABA-Africa and Freedom House produced an assessment last fall that compares the amendments to international standards of freedom of expression. Freedom House will use the assessment, which was drafted by an international team of media law experts, in future seminars to promote awareness about the extent to which the Algerian law does not conform to international human rights standards.

Conferences on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information

Freedom House had planned to send two international experts to Algeria in March to conduct a series of seminars with Algerian judges, lawyers, and journalists on freedom of expression and access to information. However, Freedom House postponed the activities until June or July because of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. International experts were reluctant to travel to Algeria during the military activities, and Freedom House's Algerian counterparts advised that the seminars be postponed for several months, when presumably there would be less focus on the war.¹

The primary purposes of the seminars will be to provide Algerian judges and lawyers with comparative information, such as the ABA-Africa/Freedom House assessment, that will encourage and assist them in advocating for reform of Algeria's defamation and insult laws and for increased access to information (e.g., through freedom of information legislation). In addition, the seminars will explore with Algerian lawyers possible strategies for defending clients charged with violating Algeria's existing defamation laws. The seminars for journalists will provide participants with comparative information to assist them in reporting accurately on stories involving freedom of expression and access to information.

Training of Trainers on Investigative Reporting of Human Rights and Rule of Law Reform

In early January 2003, Freedom House provided ICFJ a \$60,000 subgrant to implement a training of trainers project on investigative reporting of human rights and rule of law reform. The primary objectives of the project are to:

- Strengthen Algerian journalists' investigative skills through the development of a training curriculum and the training of a group of Algerian trainers drawn from a variety of newspapers in Algiers and outside the capital city;
- Reignite Algerian journalists' support for a code of professional journalism ethics and discipline;
- Increase Algerian journalists' understanding of the intersection of the journalists' ethics and discipline code with the Algerian defamation law; and
- Equip a group of Algerian journalists with skills that will enable them to serve as trainers in their newsrooms.

ICFJ had intended to conduct an assessment trip to Algeria in March, but it postponed its visit because of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. However, during the reporting period, ICFJ prepared for the training, including selection of an ICFJ expert to conduct an assessment of the current needs of the journalists and the media situation, selection of a trainer for the training of trainers workshop, negotiated partnerships to help organize the workshop, including the newspapers, *El Watan* and *El Khabar*, produced an Arabic translation of the ICFJ manual "Free and Fair: A Journalist's Guide to Improved Election Reporting in Emerging Democracies." In addition, ICFJ

¹ These seminars were originally scheduled to take place in early January 2003, but Freedom House was forced to postpone them due to the sudden unavailability of an international expert and difficulties obtaining Algerian visas for Freedom House staff.

arranged with Freedom House to combine its assessment trip with Freedom House's seminars on freedom of expression and access to information in June or July.

Algeria: Justice Sector Reform

In late 2002, the Algerian government reiterated its commitment and allocated additional funding to justice sector reform, and reports indicated that future reforms would be in the areas of: (1) increased respect for fundamental liberties and individual rights; (2) modernization of judicial institutions to increase access to justice; and (3) reforms designed to promote economic and social development.

To date, however, the government has not opened the reform process to widespread public input and debate, and civil society has not played a significant role in affecting justice sector reform. In summer 2003, Freedom House plans to bring international two international experts to Algeria to conduct a series of roundtable discussions on a particular area of justice sector reform to mixed groups of Ministry of Justice officials, legislators, civil society representatives, and journalists. Freedom House will select a topic for the roundtables that is both relevant to the issue of human rights and scheduled to be addressed in the justice sector reform process. The roundtables will provide comparative information on justice sector reform, further strengthen the role and policy advocacy skills of civil society in the justice sector reform process, and foster a dialogue between the Algerian government and civil society on justice sector reform.

Freedom House has continued to communicate with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme following productive discussions with Freedom House held last quarter about possible co-sponsorship of the roundtables. In the coming months, Freedom House plans to meet with Mr. Mohand Issad, who has directed the Algerian justice sector reform process, to select a topic for the roundtables. In addition, Freedom House will identify international experts to lead the roundtables, as well as Algerian civil society participants and locations for the roundtables.

Algerian Participation in the Freedom House Delegation to the 59th United Nations Human Rights Commission Meeting

From March 31 to April 4, 2003, Freedom House brought two Algerian human rights defenders, Nassira Belloula and Boudjema Ghechir, to Geneva to participate in Freedom House's delegation to the 59th annual United Nations Human Rights Commission (CHR) meeting. The primary purposes of their participation were to provide them with additional information about U.N. human rights mechanisms and with the opportunity to share information about the human rights situation in Algeria with members of the international community. Ms. Belloula, who is a journalist for *La Liberte* newspaper, and Mr. Ghechir, who is the President of the Algerian Human Rights League (*LADH - Ligue Algerienne des Droits de l'Homme*) in Constantine, joined a delegation that included human rights defenders from Morocco, Cuba, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

During the week in Geneva, through formal and informal targeted training sessions, Freedom House staff raised awareness and fostered understanding among the delegates on how best to

utilize their time at the CHR. The Algerian delegates met with Special Rapporteurs on Extra-Judicial Executions, Torture, Freedom of Expression, and on Arbitrary Detention. Having worked with Freedom House and prepared extensively for these meetings, both Mr. Ghechir and Ms. Belloula provided crucial information through concise and effective presentations to the Special Rapporteurs and their staff. At these meetings Mr. Ghechir and Ms. Belloula made important contacts and gained further understanding about the protocol for submitting additional information once in Algeria. In addition, with significant input from Ms. Belloula, Mr. Ghechir developed and gave a succinct and powerful presentation on the situation of human rights defenders in Algeria for a Freedom House roundtable entitled, "Shared Experiences? Successes and Challenges of Human Rights Defenders in the Islamic World."

Algeria: Freedom House Visiting Fellows Program

During this reporting period, Freedom House hosted an Algerian journalist, Mr. Mahmoud Belhimer, as part of its Visiting Fellows Program (VFP). This ten-week training program provides young journalists and human rights activists with the opportunity to work side-by-side with their American counterparts in media and non-governmental organizations. Mr. Belhimer is Deputy Chief Editor at *El-Khabar* daily newspaper, which was created in 1990 as Algeria's first independent newspaper, is owned by a group of journalists, and is Algeria's largest and most widely read newspaper. As Deputy Chief Editor, Mr. Belhimer supervises all journalists, gives directives to reporters and correspondents, and writes current affairs commentaries. Prior to his current position, he served as Chief Editor of *Al Fadjr* daily and as National News Editor of *El Youm* daily.

Mr. Belhimer joined fourteen Fellows from Southeastern Europe and Nigeria on the program in a five-day orientation session, which introduced participants to the American opinion- and policy-making community in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Maryland. Following the first week of general orientation, Mr. Belhimer participated in an intensive three-day orientation specially designed for journalists. This included a day-long workshop in investigative journalism skills and computer-assisted reporting conducted by David Kaplan and Chris Schmidt from *U.S. News & World Report*, as well as meetings with individuals such as *Newsweek* Investigative Correspondent Michael Isikoff, and representatives from the Center for Public Integrity, Society of Professional Journalists, and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists.

During his participation in the Visiting Fellows Program, Mr. Belhimer worked at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* newspaper in Fort Worth, Texas (February 10 to March 7), and Amnesty International USA in New York, NY (March 10 to 28). While working at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Mr. Belhimer worked alongside the investigative reporting team as well as with the editorial department, national, and international desks. At Amnesty International he conducted research on Guantanamo Bay detainees and civil liberties in the U.S. post-September 11. Mr. Belhimer said that through his work with Amnesty International, he gained a new perspective on the connection between human rights and rule of law and that he is eager to incorporate his new insight into his reporting in Algeria.

2. China Rule of Law and Environmental Governance project

The ABA's Asia Law Council is implementing this rule of law project with the objectives (1) to train a broad group of stakeholders (including attorneys, businesspeople, judges, officials, citizens, media representatives, academicians, and NGOs) in specific concepts of both Western and Chinese environmental policy and governance; and (2) to assist them to use this information to develop governance models that provide for greater governmental transparency, increased citizen participation in decision-making, citizen advocacy, and enhanced respect for and implementation of Chinese law.

During the winter 2003 quarter, ABA-Asia built upon its follow-on workshop in Shenyang by assisting local officials in the process of promulgating the environmental law and putting it into practice, as well as laying the groundwork for further rule of law reforms in Shenyang. After publishing the text of the law in the *Shenyang Evening News*, local officials received over 100 comments from citizens regarding the draft law. The law took effect at the end of February, and the Shenyang EPB has enlisted the help of some 700 people to publicize it, using street level booths, posters, and public lectures. The EPB also conducted a survey of about 4,000 people in connection with this effort, which indicated an extremely positive response to the law.

Mr. Li Chao, Deputy Director of the Shenyang EPB has expressed a strong desire for further collaboration between the Shenyang EPB and ABA. The EPB has asked ABA to host a second series of trainings in Shenyang, to focus specifically on implementation of the new law. Mr. Li specifically envisions trainings for citizens on how to assert their new rights granted under the law. ABA-Asia is currently preparing materials and experts to undertake this training in Spring 2003.

The Shenyang EPB also hopes to undertake a similar process in revisions to all of its environmental laws, including expert commentary and public comment and participation. Mr. Li wants to improve other rules and laws in Shenyang to a level similar to the Public Participation Law, and ensure that they comply with WTO requirements. He also has expressed an interest in holding public hearings on the role of the public in environmental impact assessment.

The Wuhan EPB in March submitted a formal proposal to ABA-Asia for review and assistance, based on the training and follow-on activities conducted there in the summer and fall. The proposal for a public environmental information electronic platform is ambitious, and includes: a web site to hold environmental laws, analyses, pollutant release information, educational materials, an inquiry system for public users, a system for collecting public opinion on environmental matters; a legal aid referral service including prior environmental decisions and relevant articles of legislation, as well as contact information for lawyers; an on-line forum; and an environmental volunteer registration network to connect individuals with local environmental NGOs and volunteer opportunities. ABA-Asia will convene further expert opinions to review the proposal, giving suggestions to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of the proposed electronic platform. ABA-Asia also will assist the EPB in efforts to find a suitable funding source for the proposal.

The Chifeng EPB continued its dialogue with the ABA-Asia Beijing representative regarding the

implementation of a land use planning process. They discussed the scope of review, necessary expertise, and financial requirements of a land use planning process.

Also during the quarter, ABA-Asia began to memorialize the three follow-on activities in self-contained modules covering both the procedural and substantive elements. For example, not only will the various texts of the public participation law in Shenyang be documented, but also the content of trainings, roundtables, and citizen comments received in connection with the law's development.

ACLA

ABA-Asia continues to build off of the strong network of collaboration it has developed with four major Chinese universities, the All China Lawyers Association (ACLA), as well as numerous government officials. Through the winter quarter, these affiliations have helped ABA-Asia in designing other upcoming China program activities, including a criminal defense forum and a legal aid workshop. ABA-Asia and ACLA also discussed the framework for a major conference on advocacy, targeted to environmental lawyers from across China, and tentatively scheduled for the summer of 2003.

Outreach

In January, ABA-Asia Associate Director Brian Rohan testified on this project before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) as one of a panel of experts discussing the relationship between the law, human rights, and persistent environmental problems in China. The testimony is a part of CECC's examination of effective programming in China.

PAC Meeting and Proposed Activities

In March, the full PAC convened again and discussed a variety of issues related to the ongoing programming. With input from the Director of CEEC, the PAC selected promising cities for future trainings, focusing on Lanzhou, Guizhou, and Xi'an. The Director of CEEC also indicated her support for the proposed concept of conducting video-trainings using the tapes of the initial training projects in as many as four additional locations. SEPA indicated its inclination to coordinate its own internal policy drafting and training initiatives on related substantive areas with the ongoing ABA-Asia project, and reiterated its commitment to providing experts for future trainings.

Other ABA-Asia Activities

ABA-Asia is undertaking several other rule of law activities outside the scope of the present cooperative agreement. These are briefly reported here to provide a complete sense of ABA-Asia's overall China activities.

Criminal Procedure: ABA-Asia is collaborating with the New York University Law School, ACLA, and the People's University in Beijing to hold a planning meeting for an upcoming criminal defense workshop, with support from the U.S. Embassy. The criminal

defense workshop, scheduled for May, will include 150 Chinese attorneys, including senior officials and policymakers, and should be a watershed event in addressing necessary changes to improve the ability of defense attorneys to represent their clients.

Real Property: With funding from its own core ABA resources as well as from the National Association of Realtors (NAR), ABA-Asia held a roundtable in January for leading Chinese property rights and real estate lawyers to meet with ABA and NAR experts. Participants discussed key targets for reform in property law, and developed plans for a broad workshop for practitioners to be held in June with support from the Reaume Foundation.

Legal Aid: With funding from the State Department's Bureau of Public Affairs, ABA-Asia continued preparations for a legal aid workshop in Xi'an, to follow up on a study tour held in fall 2002. The workshop will focus on legal aid services delivery, operation, and sustainability, and will include both government-affiliated and NGO-operated legal aid centers from across China. Originally scheduled for April 2003, the workshop has been postponed until the summer due to SARS.

3. East Timor Human Rights Support Project

Through a subgrant by Freedom House to the Coalition of International Justice (CIJ), the RIGHTS Consortium continues to support human rights initiatives in East Timor through human rights educational tools on the truth commission and the tribunals. CIJ's media consultant/film maker is nearing completion of an outreach video, which describes the various justice mechanisms being used in East Timor to overcome years of violence and oppression endured under Indonesian occupation. This is the third video in a series called, "The Road to Justice" and will focus on the ways community-based justice is fostered through the work of the truth and reconciliation commission. It also provides an overview of the other justice mechanisms being used, namely the local/international justice process in East Timor and the ad hoc Human Rights Court established in Indonesia. The video is in its final stage of editing.

Background

CIJ produced two previous 20-minute videos in the series "The Road To Justice" (completed in 2002) which described various aspects of the formal, domestic/international justice process underway in Dili. The first video dealt with the work of the investigation and prosecution unit, the Serious Crimes Unit, while the second video emphasized the work of the Court, the Special Panels, and the procedures followed once a case is brought to trial. The goal of the videos was to 'take the investigation and the courtroom' to the districts to show villagers the mechanics of this formal justice process, what they might expect as witnesses and reasons the process takes considerable time to complete. This third video is an ideal complement to the others.

Current project

The third video in the series "The Road To Justice" focuses on the truth and reconciliation commission and its role in advancing community-based justice. The video is based on video footage collected at hearings in the districts and interviews with key figures within the commission and the community.

The community-based process involves victims, deponents and members of the community. The hearings are based on voluntary participation and therefore rely upon the perpetrator's readiness to come forward and participate. If willing, a hearing is organized with a panel consisting of members of the village hierarchy and commissioners. Traditional customs are important in the process and elders are consulted and on the panel. When the panel has heard from everyone including members of the community an appropriate act of reconciliation is carried out.

The consultant travelled to the districts recording the reconciliation hearings, interviewing victims, deponents, community members and staff of the truth commission. As part of the reconciliation process, traditional ceremonies are performed at each village during the district hearings. In one such ceremony, the chief, dressed in feathers and traditional cloth rolled out a grass mat on the ground upon which open baskets were placed. After the successful hearing, the baskets were closed and the mat rolled up, signifying the community agreed on the closure of the problem. Everyone then embraced, shook hands, and a meal was shared.

At another type of hearing, a truth-seeking meeting, held in Dili at the headquarters of the truth commission, former political prisoners told their stories of detention in prisons in Dili and Jakarta and the torture and trauma they endured. The headquarters is situated in a renovated building that once was a notorious prison where the Indonesians detained East Timorese political prisoners. It has been restored but retains the cell doors and graffiti left by prisoners.

The video will likely be 30-minutes in length and will be produced in the local language, Tetum, along with a version subtitled in English. Upon completion, the consultant will provide 100 VCDs to the truth commission and local NGOs whose members will distribute it to the districts to be used during town hall meetings.

4. Rapid Response Initiative: India – ABA Asia Roundtable Discussion with the Malimath Committee on the American Criminal Justice System

In early 2003, USAID/India provided the ABA's Asia law Initiative with funding to design and implement a three-day roundtable program on the American criminal justice system for members and staff of the Committee on Reforms of the Criminal Justice System, established by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India. This Committee – known as the "Malimath Committee" because it is chaired by V.S. Malimath, former Chief Justice of the Karnataka and Kerala High Courts – is charged with issuing recommendations for reforms to India's criminal justice system. The Committee's report is due at the end of March 2003. The program took place at the India International Center in New Delhi from February 24 to 26, 2003.

The American experts and the members of the Malimath Committee consulted on how the American criminal justice system addresses a range of issues: speed of justice, witness statements and the problem of witnesses turning hostile, sexual offenses and crimes against women, punishment and alternatives to incarceration, police investigation issues, terrorism, economic crimes, and organized crimes, judicial accountability and misconduct, cyber crime, and the role of NGOs in the criminal justice system. The roundtable served as an excellent venue to provide a concrete discussion on the issues and how they might or might not work in India. The Committee's feedback on the program was very positive, stating that it provided

them with concrete information to use in the development of reforms in the Indian system. A final report has been submitted to USAID-India and the DG office under separate cover.

5. Mexico Human Rights Defenders Project

Building on its work of previous months, Freedom House conducted its Mexico Human Rights Defenders Assessment during the quarter. The assessment served as the first test of the RIGHTS Consortium's new Human Rights Assessment Tool, designed to analyze the operating context in which human rights work and provide recommendations for policy and programmatic work to strengthen their work. Prior to realization of the assessment, Freedom House conducted extensive research and interviews with Mexico experts in Washington, D.C., and developed a strategic thesis on the situation of human rights defenders, deciding to focus on human rights defenders in Mexico City and the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. The assessment took place February 24 – March 8, 2003. (The final assessment report will be available on May 12th.)

Overall, the assessment team found the environment for human rights defenders in Mexico in 2003 to be ambiguous and uncertain. While the federal government under President Vicente Fox has reached out to the human rights community and initiated various efforts to enact laws and practices to enhance respect for human rights and some measures to better protect human rights defenders, these opportunities are viewed as half steps and with suspicion by the human rights community.

Human rights defenders may work in Mexico without government restrictions, however they continue to be the subject of harassment and assaults that go unpunished. There are new gestures of official support. For instance, in the aftermath of the murder of Digna Ochoa, the Federal government provides police escorts to safeguard human rights defenders who feel threatened, if they request and accept the offer. Currently, such security is being provided for six prominent human rights defenders in the Federal District and the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Human rights defenders face many practical obstacles to doing their work effectively. They are under-funded, overworked, outnumbered, and often isolated from peers working elsewhere in the country, especially in the secondary towns of the southern states we visited. This limits their ability to learn from one another's experience and to develop broader strategies for reform. They are also constrained by Mexico's archaic legal system, where access to clients in custody is difficult; and lack of access to information, including about specific trials in which they are representing defendants, is often obstructed. A frequently cited problem is Mexican judges who do not respect the principles of due process for the accused, condone torture as a device to extract confessions, and appear to believe it is the obligation of the defendant to prove innocence rather than the duty of state prosecutors to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

A particular concern of the assessment team was the acute sense of disappointment and frustration among human rights defenders in the lack of any appreciable improvement in the human rights situation and the slow pace of reform under the administration of President Fox. This frustration is underlined by the unsolved murder of prominent human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa, which continues to haunt her colleagues and fuels a gnawing sense of personal insecurity for many. As a result, many human rights advocates and allies have largely given up hope that

Mexico's increasingly democratic political process can address their concerns, and are beginning to disengage from it. The mission came to the conclusion that this pessimism is premature and believes that such disengagement at this juncture would be unfortunate.

Freedom House intends to address this concern by organizing a strategic dialogue retreat for selected human rights leaders. The retreat will offer comparative perspectives from activists from other countries that worked in the similar transitional environments. The retreat will be designed to encourage development of a strategic vision for constructive engagement with the government on the part of human rights leaders and to build consensus between them. Further, key government representatives who are "friends" to the movement will be invited to share an insider's view of their challenges and vision for fostering change from within. The retreat is currently scheduled for the first week of July. A number of follow-up activities, including training on human rights monitoring, documentation, and reporting, support to media in reporting on the justice sector, and grants are planned through a separate USAID associate award.

Freedom House is currently recruiting a Project Director to be based in Mexico City to oversee and implement the program. Freedom House hopes to have the new Project Director contracted, approved by USAID, and on-ground by early June. Freedom House staff have identified local office space in Mexico City and will negotiate a lease in the next quarter. The office will be rented starting June 1, 2003, and furnished and equipped in the first few days of June. Freedom House is currently registering as a foreign legal person in Mexico and will manage local personnel contracts and financial management for the project.

6. Rapid Response Initiative: Criminal Justice Reform in Mexico

Through funding through the RIGHTS Rapid Response Fund, the ABA-Latin America Law Initiative is providing timely assistance to the Mexican Presidency, Los Pinos, and a inter-agency task force currently considering criminal justice reform. ABA provided exposure to comparative models and ongoing advice by posting a short-term criminal law expert in Mexico City, through seminars and study tours, and short-term specialists.

As the task force surveyed possible reform priorities, the project organized a Seminar in Mexico City (Feb. 7, 2003) on the Costa Rican reforms and criminal justice system, and a study tour to Costa Rica (Feb. 16-20). These activities were aimed at sensitizing the inter-agency group on the challenges of code implementation in a country with more experience than in Chile (a previous study tour destination), one with a very developed public defender service, and with experience in the implementation of an oral juvenile justice system. The group was also able to witness proceedings and oral testimony by victims of human rights violations in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which is housed in San Jose, Costa Rica. Finally, the group had the opportunity to meet with the country's vice-president, Lineth Saborio, who had been involved in the creation of Costa Rica's criminal investigative police. As a result of the Costa Rica conference and study tour, the task force and drafters gained greater sensitivity to the range of challenges in the implementation of new criminal procedure reforms, and the effect of the

divergent focuses of these processes in comparison with the U.S. model, the Chilean model and to some extent the German² model.

Later in this reporting period, the Federal Prosecutor's Office (PGR) advanced its drafting of a proposed reform of the criminal procedure at the federal level. The ABA technical consultant analyzed and commented on two versions of the draft with the PGR team and to Los Pinos. A third draft, substantially similar to the second, is now under review. These comments and the ensuing debate in periodic meetings with Los Pinos personnel, have led them to accept the project recommendation that a technical committee be formed to organize a more coherent approach to code reform, beginning with a new design from the outline stage, rather than making attempts to patch up the existing code, originally drafted in 1934 with periodic partial reforms since then. Los Pinos seems willing to take on this challenge, and to enlist new and more objective resources to achieve the structural reform they are proposing.

The ABA expert participated in internal PGR seminars approximately every two weeks to discuss and critique proposed reforms and report on progress in drafting. These meetings initially involved members of the inter-agency group formed by the Presidency to look into code reform among executive agencies. Later it became more specialized involving prosecutors from specific practice areas inside the PGR and member of INACIPE, the academic think-tank and PGR training body.

Seminars were organized by the ABA Justice Reform Project on specific topic areas of interest to the PGR drafting team, including juvenile justice and witness protection.

A special expert on juvenile justice, Mary Beloff, was brought in to give her critique of the existing draft code for juvenile justice. Her advice led to the recognition that a parallel Mexican national effort at drafting such a code provided a complete framework for moving forward on juvenile justice reforms, and helped the Los Pinos team to come to terms with the shortcomings of the PGR adult criminal procedure reform proposal. It also helped provide a discourse on new foundations for a juvenile justice system in Mexico, that was previously lacking in the PGR. Nevertheless, the draft the expert recommended has also been provided to the PGR and Los Pinos. It is believed that this expert's advice on the project will lead to a more coherent and united effort on juvenile justice reform. However, the success of this reform also depends on the creation of a coherent criminal procedure reform that could enable the new juvenile justice principles to become operative.

Two experts were provided to share information on the formation and implementation of witness protection programs helped to give a context to the Mexican efforts to provide for witness protection in the proposal for a new criminal procedure. The PGR acknowledged that they practiced witness protection without having the legal framework to ensure resources and appropriate mechanisms to make the programs effective. Also participating in this event was the DOJ representative of the U.S. Embassy, who, as an experienced prosecutor, provided an overall view of the practical and legal context for the operation of witness protection programs in the U.S. system of prosecutions.

² A seminar in Mexico City on the German criminal justice system was previously sponsored by Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the PGR and the National Center for State Courts.

Visits were also made to local courts for observation of different stages of trial proceedings and interviews with public defenders and court personnel, and project personnel also attended conferences sponsored by other AID funded projects concerning the role of the judiciary and judges in the justice system. The goal was to meet justice-sector policy-makers and actors at the State level, and to provide the necessary context for coordinated planning in the Justice Reform Project, vis-à-vis other USAID sponsored projects.

7. The Russian Journalists Project

Baltics-Russia Conference

During this reporting period, Freedom House issued a sub-grant to the Russian think tank, "Strategy" to organize a three-day conference, "**Baltic Think-Tanks: Strategies for Active Involvement of Larger Civil Society. The Cases on Baltic Security.**" The conference took place from March 20-22 and brought together nearly 60 think-tank and civil society activists from the Northwest Russia and the Baltic States to discuss the most effective models of their involvement in the area of Baltic security. One of the most important issues affecting security in the region has been concern by Russia over the treatment of the Russian minority living in the Baltic States. A chief goal of the conference was to positively affect policy debates about enhancing regional stability in the Baltic Sea region by strengthening advocacy skills of civil society leaders from the Northwest Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on a common agenda. At the first plenary session the Commissioner for the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Helle Degn, made a presentation on human rights issues and the resolution of national minorities problems in the Baltic Sea region. She discussed mechanisms by which citizens of any of the Baltic Sea states can file complaints to the office of the Commissioner on Democratic Development and stressed the important role of civil society organizations, particularly think-tanks, in addressing issues of human rights through trans-border projects.

The overall tone of the conference was one of cooperation and dialog. Those present were grateful for the opportunity to exchange information and ideas and many participants came prepared to discuss concrete joint projects and policy recommendations. While this was particularly true of the participants from the Baltic States, the Russian participants were also eager to participate in joint initiatives. For example, the conference organizer, Strategy, is already working to develop trans-border projects with the Lithuanian Free Market Institute on anti-corruption and transparency and is discussing a project with the Center for Civic Initiatives to develop a set of training modules for promoting tolerance, especially in regards to minorities in Kaliningrad, Lithuania, and Belarus. Despite the concurrent outbreak of the war in Iraq, the conference was widely covered by the media. More than twenty journalists attended the conference and articles or stories were produced by Radio Russia, *Nevskoye Vremya*, *Youth of Estonia*, the "Ima-Press" information agency, Novaya Gezeta, Radio Mayak, the ROSBALT Information Agency, *Pravoye Delo*, and the on-line newspaper KMNews.ru, among others.

Russia Study Tour

In early March, Freedom House issued a subgrant to the Saint Petersburg Union of Journalists (SPUJ) to organize a study tour for Latvian and Estonian journalists to visit Saint Petersburg and the Russian border city Pskov. The goal of the program was to provide the Russian journalists a chance to get first-hand information about views and attitudes of Russians toward their countries and to afford them an opportunity to discuss key issues regarding Baltic-Russian relations with Russian journalists and government officials to increase mutual understanding of these issues. Through the end of the reporting period, SPUJ worked with the Latvian Institute and the Estonian Union of Journalists to identify candidates for the program. The following candidates were chosen:

Latvia:

- **Ms. Gunita Butane**, Journalist, National Latvian Newspaper "*Diena*"
- **Ms. Inga Papparde**, Journalist, Latvian Daily Newspaper "*Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*"
- **Ms. Dace Kaukule**, Reporter, LNT (Latvian Independent Television)
- **Ms. Olga Pavuk**, Editor-in-Chief, *The Baltic Course* (Russian-language magazine)

Estonia:

- **Ms. Alexandra Manukjan**, Head of News Dept., "*Molodezh' Estonii*"
- **Mr. Sander Silm**, Editor, "*Polva Koi*" (daily newspaper in southern Estonia, Freelance journalist for national dailies *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Postimees*)
- **Mr. Dmitry Mikhailov**, Anchorman and Editor, Estonian Public Television
- **Ms. Margarita Kornysheva**, Freelance journalist, *Estonia* and *Vesti*

SPUJ also began putting together meetings and internships for the study tour, which was scheduled for April 21-27.

C. ASSOCIATE AWARDS

Associate Award mechanisms allow the RIGHTS Consortium to support longer-term, more comprehensive rule of law and human rights development activities by providing technical expertise and training. During the sixteenth quarter, the Consortium implemented projects through the following associate awards:

- **Morocco: Promoting Ethics in Government (NDI)**
- **Human Rights Promotion in Morocco (Freedom House)**
- **Mediation in Mexico (ABA-Latin America/Freedom House)**
- **Human Rights Defenders Support in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Freedom House)**

Full reports of activities under the Associate Awards are submitted under separate cover.