



World Alliance for Citizen
Participation

e-CIVICUS

A Free Weekly Electronic Newsletter Promoting Civic Existence, Expression & Engagement

Please send contributions, comments and questions to editor@civicus.org.

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CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen
Participation

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ABOUT e-CIVICUS

The CIVICUS weekly electronic publication is keeping tens of thousands of people informed of the developments taking place in civil society, the factors that are affecting them and the impact they are having on creating an informed and knowledgeable civil society.

**e-CIVICUS WELCOMES
CONTRIBUTIONS**

e-CIVICUS offers a useful channel through which you and your organisation can share your news, publicise your events and articulate the issues you face. Please send us your contributions by Monday for publication in the coming week to editor@civicus.org. All contributions must focus on civil society issues or have a civil society angle. To read

FROM THE DESK OF CIVICUS' SECRETARY GENERAL



Dear friends and colleagues,

The Arab region receives a lot of media attention. Most of the coverage, especially in the international media, is focused on terrorism, violence and contentious religious issues. All too often the news is presented by commentators outside the region through the lens of their countries' interests. Within the region too, there are few spaces for independent civil society voices. What is the real story lived and felt by people working in the region?

Thus this special issue of e-CIVICUS on the Arab region. Across the region, civil society organizations and activists are engaging with the myriad issues and daunting challenges faced by the people who live there. This issue captures just some of their news, views and stories.

While this is a special issue on the Arab region, we will continue to carry stories from the region in future editions. If you would like to contribute with a piece from the Arab region or any other, simply email it to editor@civicus.org.

With gratitude, faith and solidarity,

Ingrid Srinath

Sudan Elections 2010: will it be free, fair, peaceful and comprehensive?

By Hassan Abdel Ati

The first democratic election in Sudan was organized in 1953 during the 3 years self rule period in the countdown to independence on the first of January 1956. Yet during the 53 years of independence only 4 (four) democratic elections were organized because for 42 years Sudan was under military and/or civilian dictatorship (1958-64, 1969-85, 1989-2009). One of the major gains for all Sudanese people brought about by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 between the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Government led by the National Congress Party (NCP), was the clauses committing the two parties to a free and fair democratic election in the middle of the 6-years transitional period agreed upon (2006-2011). *To read more, [click here](#)*

CIVICUS Poll Question

the contribution guidelines, [click here](#).

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Civil Society Watch Monthly Bulletin

The CIVICUS e-newsletter Civil Society Watch Monthly Bulletin is an action-oriented newsletter distributed to over 7,400 people, featuring insightful interviews, updates on threats to civil society, and analyses of current situations. Read more at www.civicus.org.

This week's question:

What level of impact do you think social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, are having on social activism and civil society?

- a. A huge impact – it's revolutionizing the way we work and our ability to be heard.
- b. Some impact – It increases our options but doesn't replace old ways of doing things.
- c. Minimal impact – It's all hype, it is still just as hard to get the voices of the disadvantaged heard.

To answer the question, [click here](#).

Previous question: Do you believe that the UN Conference on the Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development was...

- a. a step in the right direction but we'll have to see if anything actually comes of it
- b. a step closer to rule by the powerful (G20) and away from a legitimate forum (the UN)
- c. a waste of time and an insult to the citizen around the world suffering during the current crisis

Results: a. - 45%, b. - 20%, c. - 35%

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CIVIL SOCIETY NEWS

Iran's leaders fear their own people most

By Shaazka Beyerle

On Monday 29 June something surprising happened in Iran. It wasn't the Guardian Council's certifying the results of the June 12 presidential election - the questionable victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over Mir Hossein Mousavi. It wasn't that thousands of people took to the streets even though electricity, landline and mobile phone connections were cut. Nor was it that security forces were out en masse. It was that citizens confounded the authorities with dispersed actions. According to Roozonline, rather than concentrating in one place, groups formed across Tehran - "something that

CIVICUS channel on YouTube:
'Time 2 Act' Go to YouTube, [click here](#).



CIVICUS' 1 for 1 membership campaign
Are you one of the missing 86?
One CIVICUS member for every UN member state, that's the goal of CIVICUS' 1 for 1 Membership campaign, [click here](#).

government agents did not expect, and so [they] did not know how to respond ..." *Read more, [click here](#).*

Parliament rejects restrictive amendments to media laws - Civil Society and the Media Out of Immediate Danger?

Source: Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression

Article 19 welcomes a decision on 30 June by the parliament of Azerbaijan, the Milli Mejlis, not to adopt the most restrictive proposals in a package of legislative amendments governing civil society and media. However, questions remain as to why these restrictive amendments were proposed in the first place, why some were adopted, and why members of civil society who demonstrated against the amendments were harassed. *Read more, [click here](#).*

Arab States drag Human Rights Council to the brink of disaster

Source: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

The 11th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), from 2-19 June, witnessed a barrage of attacks leveled at the Council's credibility and effectiveness, which were largely initiated or led by Arab League and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) member states, said the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) today. "I am afraid such attacks, while exceptionally strong this session, are not surprising," said Moataz El Feghery, Executive Director of CIHRS. "They are part of a larger strategy by the Arab League and OIC to systematically weaken international human rights bodies." *For details, [click here](#).*



Israel: Refugees, asylum-seekers and protection - analysis

Source: IRIN News

The Israeli Interior Ministry is taking over the process of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) from the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on 2 July. Some 15,000 mainly African asylum-seekers in Israel have put the regulatory, security and welfare response under strain, according to the Interior Ministry and UNHCR. Israel does not have a refugee law, despite being a signatory to the 1951 refugee Convention. However, regulations can allow asylum-seekers to work, and grant temporary protection and non-refoulement (a commitment not to force people back to where they came from). About 200-300 asylum-seekers arrive each month, mainly overland from Egypt, according to the Immigration Authority and NGOs. *For details, [click here](#).*

Iran: Censors fail to silence cyber-activists

Source: Inter Press Service (IPS)

To mark the tenth anniversary of Iran's student uprising in 1999 amid the continued rejection by many voters of the results of the disputed 12 June election, student activists issued a national call to protest last week. However, given the harsh crackdown against protesters in the past three weeks, it is unlikely that a large number of demonstrators will turn out. Still, the call has been taken seriously by authorities, who have once again shut down mobile text messaging or Short Message Service (SMS). The prevalence of mobile phones and the relatively low cost use of text messaging have made this form of communication popular in Iran in recent years. *For details, [click here](#).*

The failed states index 2009

Source: Foreign Policy

It is a sobering time for the world's most fragile countries—virulent economic crisis, countless natural disasters, and government collapse. This year, we delve deeper than ever into just what went wrong—and who is to blame. Yemen may not yet be front-page news, but it's being watched intently these days in capitals worldwide. A perfect storm of state failure is now brewing there: disappearing oil and water reserves; a mob of migrants, some allegedly with al Qaeda ties, flooding in from Somalia, the failed state next door; and a weak government increasingly unable to keep things running. Many worry Yemen is the next Afghanistan: a global problem wrapped in a failed state. *For details, [click here](#).*

Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble along the trigger line

Source: International Crisis Group

As sectarian violence in Iraq has ebbed over the past year, a new and potentially just as destructive political conflict has arisen between the federal government and the Kurdistan regional government in Erbil. This conflict has manifested itself in oratory, backroom negotiations and military manoeuvres in disputed territories, raising tensions and setting off alarm bells in Washington just as the Obama administration is taking its first steps to pull back U.S. forces. A lasting solution can only be political – involving a grand bargain on how to divide or share power, resources and territory – but in the interim both sides should take urgent steps to improve communications and security cooperation, run joint military checkpoints and patrols in disputed territories and refrain from unilateral steps along the new, de facto dividing line, the so-called trigger line. *For details, [click here](#).*

Russian civil society leaders to appeal to Obama

Source: Reuters

Russian civil society leaders will appeal to President Barack Obama on Tuesday to focus a spotlight on the country's democratic deficit and lack of transparency. Obama plans to dedicate several hours to dozens of organisations, entrepreneurs and NGOs who operate in Russia as part of his two-day visit -- a session his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev turned down, sources said. After signing a series of bilateral agreements on Monday, including on nuclear arms reduction and Afghanistan, Obama said he would turn his attention to more human issues. *For details, [click here](#).*



No official date for mass Pakistani IDP returns

Source: IRIN News

The Pakistani government has not yet set a date for the official start of the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes in various parts of North West Frontier Province (NWFP). "So far, no date has been announced officially," said Lt-Col Raja Waseem Shahid of the Special Support Group (SSG), set up by the government to oversee IDP affairs. *For details, [click here](#).*

US frees five Iranians held in Iraq

Source: Aljazeera.net

Five Iranian officials have been released two years after being detained by the US military, Iran's ambassador to Baghdad has said. Hassan Kazemi Qomi told Iran's semi-official Fars news agency that the men had been handed over to the Iraqi authorities on Thursday and would soon be taken to the Iranian embassy. "Five Iranian diplomats kidnapped by American occupying forces have been handed over to Iraq's prime minister," he said. US forces seized five Iranians in the northern Iraqi town of Irbil in January 2007 saying that they suspected them of arming and funding Shia groups in Iraq. *For details, [click here](#).*



The battle for Iraq's security

Source: Aljazeera.net

US troops started to withdraw from Iraq's cities at the end of June -leaving security in the hands of the Iraqi army and police. The pullback marks the first step towards a US exit strategy from Iraq. Barack Obama, the US president, has vowed to withdraw most US troops from Iraq by August next year. But plenty of armed forces and militias are still active in Iraq.

Following the US troop withdrawal, how might they respond to the new balance of forces on the ground? What is the future of the militias in Iraq now that the US has withdrawn from the urban areas? Does the fight continue until the last American soldier leaves? We ask: Who are these groups and what is their relationship with Iraqi government forces? *For details, [click here](#).*

Letter to Hon. Rupiah Banda, President of Zambia

By Ingrid Srinath, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

We are deeply concerned about certain restrictive aspects of the NGO Bill, 2009 that your Government is planning to introduce in Parliament. We recognise that some of the concerns raised by civil society in the 2007 version of the Bill have been addressed. Nevertheless, key provisions of

the Bill restrict the independence of NGOs and subject them to excessive and unwarranted controls which serve to impede rather than enable the freedom of association guaranteed by the Constitution of Zambia and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights to which Zambia is a party. *To read more, [click here](#).*

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS UPDATE



Assisting Urban Refugees towards Self Reliance

Source: UNHCR, Yemen and UNV Programme

The effects of the global recession are being felt by all, rich and poor, and Yemen is no exception. However, when the belt tightens, it is usually the poor who feel it the most and refugees in Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries, are really feeling the squeeze. As increasing numbers of elderly and single headed refugee families started coming to UNHCR's office in Sana'a, sitting for hours, day after day, asking for assistance for rent that they could no longer pay and food they could no longer afford, UNHCR felt compelled to respond. *To read more, [click here](#).*

Survey on good practices for social integration/inclusion

Source: UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)

The NGO Committee for Social Development invites you to respond to a survey on social integration, in connection with the United Nations Commission for Social Development. The survey aims to collect experiences, good practices and policy recommendations to be presented to governments and the international community in February 2010 at the policy session of the Commission. *To proceed with the survey, [click here](#). For more information, [click here](#).*

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) has launched a redesigned website.

Source: UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)

As before, NGLS's new website provides civil society organisations with the latest relevant information on the activities of the UN system, its agencies and other intergovernmental processes. It features new functionalities that improve navigation and usability. Viewers can now sort information by the main areas of work of the UN. A new section "Issues in Focus" also allows users to get in-depth coverage on issues that are high on the UN agenda, such as climate change and the world economic and financial crisis. The working site-level search engine is another tool that facilitates quick access to information. The website also gives practical information on the UN system and how civil society can engage in its work. It has handy resources and tools including:

- Practical guides on the UN system and other NGLS booklets on topical issues;
- An updated list of civil society contact points of the UN system.

In addition to accessing NGLS publications, visitors can obtain a number of featured UN publications and civil society news. An updated calendar of UN events and meetings relevant to civil society organisations is another new feature of the website. Since this is a work in progress, users have the opportunity to comment or request more information in order to help develop the site. NGLS welcomes your feedback. *To visit the new website, [click here](#).*

[Read more...](#)

BOOKS, REPORTS & RESOURCES

Global Forum on Freedom of Expression

Source: Global Forum on Freedom of Expression

This June, the Global Forum on Freedom of Expression gathered the world's most prominent global free expression networks and 500 individuals in Oslo, Norway for a week of seminars, workshops, networking events and lectures. The brief summary report now released gives highlights from the many events during the week of the Global Forum and looks back on some of the memorable discussions between the leading thinkers and activists of the free expression community. *To view the report, [click here](#).*

You may also visit <http://expressionforum.org/materials> for links to video, pictures presentations and documentation from the Global Forum.

Facing challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities in the Arab region

Paper by the Arab NGO Network for Development and Christian Aid

The global economic and financial crisis comes at a time when countries and citizens have been trying to adjust to wildly fluctuating food and fuel prices. What started as a financial markets' crisis has turned into a fully-fledged economic and social one. As in other regions of the world, the Arab region has been witnessing serious implications reflected in shrinking economic activity, higher rates of poverty and unemployment, increasing stress on social services, and further economic insecurities and violations of economic and social rights. *To read more, [click here](#).*



Amman Center for Human Rights Studies quarterly newsletter

Source: Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)

During the spring period, ACHRS engaged in several activities in different fields of action. During these months ACHRS have had several meetings with international and local organisations, to discuss new projects and initiatives. In spite of the upcoming summer period, the next months will be intense and productive, in order to develop and concretely implement all our ideas. *To read more, [click here](#).*

Seminar of dialogue on the amending laws and the new developments in the death penalty

Source: Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies [ACHRS] and the Jordanian Alliance Against Capital Punishment held a session of dialogue to oppose capital punishment. Several members of the Alliance, including academics, party officials, intellectuals, media workers, and human rights activists participated in the dialogue. Chairman of the Legal Committee of the House of Representatives, Mubarak Abu-Yassin, gave a lecture on the relevant laws and other legislation submitted to the current extraordinary session of the House of Representatives. He expressed hope that this legal activity will result in the enacting of laws in line with the Jordanian citizens' interests and continue to minimize the scope and applicability of capital punishment in Jordanian laws by freezing these laws at the present time and perhaps revoking them for good on a later date. *For details, [click here](#).*

In light of the Global Financial Crisis, will donors deliver on aid commitments or buckle?

By Archbishop Njongo Ndungane

This is that time of the year when reports about how well donors have performed in meeting their aid commitments are released. 2009 is unique because of the devastating effects of the global financial crisis and what is on everyone's mind is: will donors sustain their commitments or will they buckle under the heavyweight of the global financial crisis? African Monitor along with others has issued its 2008/9 report; the Development Support Monitor. There is general agreement that donors made more progress in 2008 in terms of increasing aid to Sub-Saharan Africa than in 2006/7. While in 2007 the G8 countries were significantly off track, the encouraging performance in 2008 demonstrates that if performance is maintained at the same level, most of the countries will meet the targets set for 2010, 2011 and 2013. But there are some, notably Italy and France who will not. Italy has so far delivered about 3% of the US\$8 billion it pledged in additional funding. Worse still, Italy may actually be planning cut, not increase aid in the coming years. *For details, [click here](#).*



The Sherpa Newsletter

Source: Sherpatimes.com

The Sherpa is a regular e-newsletter for people advocating on the global stage. The Sherpa aims to bring useful information and intelligence to the global advocacy community to increase collaboration and intelligence sharing. The Sherpa tries to do this in an entertaining yet insightful way: think of it as People magazine meets the IMF World Economic Outlook. By combining highlights of events, activities and commentary, The Sherpa is a handy companion for any global advocacy professional. The Sherpa derives its name from the governmental negotiators at the global summits. The word Sherpa was borrowed from the hard-working and famous Nepalese porters by the global community sometime in the 1960s, to describe the civil servants who prepared the head of state for the Summit (G8, European Union etc) and the name stuck. *For details, [click here](#).*

Analysis of the Zambia NGO Bill 2009

By Mandeep S. Tiwana, Civil Society Watch Programme, CIVICUS

Civil society is now internationally recognised and respected as a sector with legitimate roles to play in society, just as the government and the private sector have their own distinct roles to play. One such role of government is to promote and protect human rights, which includes ensuring space for civil society to act without hindrance. CIVICUS recognises the constitutional commitment of the Republic of Zambia to safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms including the right to freedom of association under Article 11 (b). This right is also guaranteed to the Zambian people under Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights ratified by Zambia. In this context CIVICUS provides the following submission to the Government of Zambia in respect to the Zambia Non-Governmental Organisations Bill, 2009 (hereinafter referred as the "Bill") slated to be introduced in Parliament in mid July 2009. *For details, [click here](#).*

CONFERENCES, COURSES & EVENTS

New graduate diploma: Specialization in Psychosocial Intervention for Forced Migrants and Refugees

September, 2009 Cairo, Egypt

The American University in Cairo (AUC) Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) is pleased to announce its plans for an additional Graduate Diploma with a Specialization in Psychosocial Intervention for forced migrants and refugees beginning in September 2009. *For details, [click here](#).*



Humanitarian Affairs Segment

20 - 22 July 2009

The ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, which will take place from 20 – 22 July 2009, provides an important forum where Member States and humanitarian organisations discuss the challenges, opportunities and activities related to the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. *For details, [click here](#).*

Conference on Global Food Security

5 - 7 October 2009, Montreal, Canada

World food prices have fallen from their 2008 peaks but prices remain well above long-term norms and the food crisis has not disappeared. The numbers of malnourished people increased by 40 million last year and the total number of people with insufficient food has reached almost 1 billion. Underlying trends show that global agricultural production cannot keep up with rising demand without support and investment. The world wide financial crisis has resulted in credit for farmers becoming expensive and difficult to find, potentially causing fewer crops to be planted and exacerbating food shortages. In addition, commodity market prices have declined more rapidly than production costs, yielding tight margins for producers. *For details, [click here](#).*

CALL FOR PAPERS, SUBMISSIONS, SURVEYS & NOMINATIONS

The Manthan award 2009

Application Deadline: 31 July 2009

Manthan Award is a first of its kind initiative in India to recognise the best practices in e-Content and Creativity. It was launched on 10th October '2004, by Digital Empowerment Foundation in partnership with World Summit Award and American India Foundation. Since then it has come to define the very best in e-Content for development arena in India. Now, after four immensely successful years of holding it within India, the organisers have felt that it's about time it is expanded a bit and its areas of operation now is all of SAARC countries namely India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan & Afghanistan. So nominations are welcome from all of SAARC countries. Welcome aboard the gLocal journey called Manthan. Welcome one, welcome all. *For details, [click here](#).*

APPOINTMENTS

This week, new civil society job openings have been added to the CIVICUS website. Please [click here](#).

Should you wish to publish a **New Vacancy**, please click on [Add job](#). Please add an expiry date for applications.

JOBS OF THE WEEK

Civil Society Index (CSI) Research Intern

Application Deadline: 24 July 2009

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Johannesburg, South Africa

For details, [click here](#).

Global Coordinator for Stand Up

Application Deadline: 12 July 2009

United Nations Millennium Campaign

Location: Cairo, Egypt

For details, [click here](#).

Policy adviser, MDGs, social policy and civil society empowerment

Application Deadline: 28 July 2009

United Nations Development Programme

Location: Regional Centre Cairo (RBAS RCC), Egypt

For details, [click here](#).

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