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### CLA to attend NGOs' strategy council on charter of rights

CLA will attend a strategy roundtable in Sydney of government and non-government organisations (NGOs) called to organise a concerted, cooperative effort in the coming national debate over introducing a charter of rights and responsibilities for Australia.

Prof George Williams flagged the conference, being held on Monday 2 June, when he delivered the keynote address to the CLA AGM on 5 April.

The Australian Government human rights organisation, HREOC, has officially called the roundtable in conjunction with the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at UNSW.

The event will be held at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's offices in the Sydney CBD.

Sessions include:

- current state of Australian law and policy;
- lessons from the ACT, Victoria, WA and Tasmania;
- achieving a consistent message and use of the media; and

- building platforms for future cooperation and future pathways.

At press time, it had not been decided who would represent CLA.

The main aim of the strategic conference is to get groups 'speaking off the one hymn sheet', avoiding internecine fighting which sabotaged republican debate processes a decade ago.

## **LAST WORD: Secrecy expands in US Budget**

The classified budget of the US Defense Department, only published in outline, has nearly doubled in the Bush years, to \$32 billion. *Read the full item at the end of this bulletin. (Also: read about **Little Green Men!**)*

## **Summit calls for charter of rights**

Two streams at the Australian 2020 Summit in Canberra last month plumped for a national charter of rights and responsibilities.

Both the 'Australian governance' stream and the 'strengthening communities and supporting working families' stream recommended a national charter as one of their key ideas. This is partly captured in the initial report (p23 and p32) but is clearer in the plenary *PowerPoint* report from the final day:

<http://www.australia2020.gov.au/index.cfm>

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave lukewarm support to the idea, or at least is keeping an 'open mind', stating in an SBS interview: "Well, on the question of a charter of rights, there is already, I believe, an investigation called for by the Labor Party through its last platform on that. And that's the best way forward because there are conflicting views as to what a charter of rights, a legislative charter of rights, does and what it doesn't do, and what its impacts might be. So, open mind on that. And there is already some investigatory work under way." (interview with Karen Middleton, SBS TV News, 20 April 2008).

As reported in CLArion in April, CLA expects a discussion paper to be released in June or July. The Attorney-General's Department is working up a benchmark paper analysing past attempts at a rights instrument in Australia, as well as international comparisons.

– with thanks to: Gabrielle McKinnon, ACT HR Research Project, ANU

## **Australian chairs Irish rights process: no result yet**

Northern Ireland has just concluded a year-long bill of rights consultative process, chaired by Australian human rights expert Chris Sidoti, but still has more to do before a new law is enacted.

The consultative process was a little-known part of commitments made within the 1998 Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement in October 2006 which ended the years of sectarian warfare in NI. Details: <http://www.billofrightsforum.org/>

Mr Sidoti was foundation director of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1987-1992), an Australian Law Reform Commissioner (1992-1995) and Australian Human Rights Commissioner (1995-2000), and Director of the International Service for Human Rights (2003-07).



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## **Disability Convention operates from 3 May**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities becomes operative on 3 May 2008 after being ratified by the UN on 3 April 2008.

It is one of the fastest treaties ever negotiated at the UN, and the optional protocol to it will also enter into force on 3 May 2008. Australia has formally signed on to the convention, and it is hoped the Rudd Government will ratify it domestically – making it fully applicable in Australia – as soon as possible.

## **CLA congratulates IGIS for speaking out**

CLA has written to congratulate the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, Ian Carnell, for calling on the Australian Government to make substantial changes to anti-terrorism laws.

"Civil liberties relies on you," CLA President Dr Kristine Klugman wrote to Mr Carnell, who is the only person in Australia allowed to pry into the doings of the secret services, ASIO domestically and ASIS internationally.

"I write to congratulate you on your principled stand in calling for substantial changes to the anti-terrorism laws," she wrote.

Mr Carnell spoke out in an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

"My belief is that a key test for liberal democracies in the area of counter-terrorism is a willingness to revisit what was introduced when there was a sense of urgency and, if necessary, modify the measures to ensure effectiveness, balance and proportionality," Mr Carnell said.

"This is particularly so if some aspects may be counter-productive, such as adding to the sense of alienation and discrimination which members of the Muslim communities can suffer."

An alienated Islamic community not only provided more fertile ground for violent extremists to emerge, but discouraged Muslims from providing counter-terrorism authorities with vital information, the Sydney Morning Herald reported him as saying.

Mr Carnell has recommended the repeal of the vaguely worded offence of "associating" with a terrorism group, which carries jail terms of up to 10 years.

The offence can cover those who have an innocent relationship with suspected terrorists or groups, and Mr Carnell believes the offence transgresses human rights and interferes with "ordinary family, religious and legal communication".

He also called for the process of proscribing a terrorist organisation to be taken out of the hands of the attorney-general.

– report by Tom Allard, SMH, 12 Apr 08

<http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2008/04/11/1207856832385.html>

## Another government agency sells public trust for pieces of silver

The road traffic entity for Australia and New Zealand, Austroads, wants to use your driver's licence data, collected publicly under mandatory rules, to make money privately.

Austroads is "the association of Australian and New Zealand road transport and traffic authorities and aims to improve road and road transport outcomes", according to its website.

Expect salaries of Austroads executives to take a sizeable leap when this public sector scam switches on.

Austroads wants to share people's licence details in the National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System (NEVDIS) with insurance companies.

"Austroads Registration and Licensing Task Force is in discussions with the intent of providing vehicle information to insurance companies," a spokeswoman for the organisation said last month. Using weasel words, she said that releasing the information would "provide a benefit to the community by assisting in the reduction of motor vehicle theft and insurance fraud".

Using the other fallback of out-of-control government agencies – the threat of terrorism – Austroads is eyeing off selling your drivers' licence data to banks and finance bodies.

These Austroads proposals shatter privacy regulations.

Victoria's roads authority, VicRoads, could be in breach of tough privacy restrictions under the state's Road Safety Act if NEVDIS was opened to commercial entities, according to Victorian Privacy Commissioner Helen Versey. NSW Privacy said Austroads would need to ensure its plans did not violate the state's Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act.

These Austroads proposals completely pervert the only reason for which the data was originally collected. "The prospect of personal data being passed to private-sector organisations, when it was gathered for the purposes of government regulation, and under legal compulsion, is particularly galling, and an outright breach of public trust," chair of the Australian Privacy Foundation, Professor Roger Clarke, said.

So is selling out for pieces of silver, CLA says.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,23501578-15306,00.html>

A special briefing by Austroads in Sydney on 1 May will explain the Smartcard Licence Interoperability Protocol (SLIP).

This Queensland smartcard license project is likely to be the forerunner for similar schemes in other states, effectively creating a supra-national (including New Zealand) drivers' licence scheme.

Austroads, the association of Australian and NZ road traffic authorities, seems to have an ID card option in mind – from their briefing notes: "...the smartchip also provides the opportunity for businesses to verify the authenticity of the license, read information from the chip and potentially verify currency of license data".

– information from Greg Taylor, EFA

Information: <http://www.austroads.com.au/registration.html>



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## **Governments at last take ID crime seriously**

The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) released the Model Criminal Law Officers' Committee (MCLOC) Final Report on Identity Crime at its meeting in late March.

A year ago, MCLOC released a discussion paper on identity crime for public consultation. Submissions were received from 26 organisations, including State Police forces, government agencies and community associations.

MCLOC recommends the following model offences:

making, supplying or using identification information with the intention of committing an indictable offence, punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment

possessing identification information with the intention of committing an indictable offence, punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment, and

possessing equipment capable of being used to make identification information with the intention of using, or allowing another person to use, that equipment for the purpose of committing an identity crime offence, punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment.

The report also recommends that courts issue certificates to victims of ID crime, to use to help avoid problems the crime has caused them, such as in re-establishing their credit histories. Queensland and South Australia already have similar provisions.

What is also needed is reimbursement for victims by government or the private sector if IDs have been compromised by negligence or failure to meet reasonably security standards, CLA believes.

[http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Publications\\_FinalReport-IdentityCrime-March2008](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Publications_FinalReport-IdentityCrime-March2008)

## **Frustrated Ombudsman works around NSW Government FOIbles**

NSW Ombudsman Bruce Barbour will hold his own review of the state Freedom of Information Act because of the repeated failure of the NSW Government to do so.

"For almost 14 years, each NSW Ombudsman, including myself, has called for an independent and comprehensive review of the FOI Act," Mr Barbour said in a media release late last month.

FOI legislation was "the cornerstones of good governance" which was designed to ensure government decision-making was open and transparent, and that decision-makers were held accountable for their actions.

Dr David Solomon is reviewing the Queensland FOI laws for the Qld Government, and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has promised changes to federal FOI laws this year. A 2020 Summit recommendation also proposed overhauling the laws.

Mr Barbour said he would investigate freedom-of-information practices at government agencies, councils, universities and area health services, but which ones had not been decided, the *SMH* reported.

Last year's NSW Ombudsman annual report highlighted that applications released in full in NSW dropped from 81 per cent in 1995-96 to 52 per cent in 2005-06. This compared with the Commonwealth where 78 per cent of requests were granted in full.

<http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2008/04/22/1208742940209.html>

## **Victorians aim to curb police, but tread on dangerous rights grounds**

Victoria's new Police Integrity Bill sets up a new scheme for investigating corruption and serious misconduct by members of the Victoria Police.

In particular, the Bill aims to:

re-establish the Office of Police Integrity ('OPI'), an investigative and a review body separate to the Victoria Police which reports directly to the Victorian Parliament; and

prescribe the functions of the OPI and the Director of Police Integrity ('DPI').

The Bill is the second part of a three-stage process to replace the legislative regime controlling Victoria Police, following the Police Regulation Amendment Act 2007 which was assented to on 11 December 2007.

Human rights issues are raised by a number of the provisions of the Bill, including:

compulsory information gathering powers to be granted to the DPI and other officers; and

testing of OPI personnel for alcohol and drugs of dependence.

– report by Edwina Chin and Sam Porter, Human Rights Law Group, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, in the (Victorian) Human Rights Law Resource Centre's May bulletin, website: [www.hrlrc.org.au](http://www.hrlrc.org.au)

CLA believes that police officers have rights too, and that possible excesses in this Bill should be carefully scrutinised, and closely monitored when the final act is passed.



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## CLA reports on main activities for April 08:

CLA's 2008 annual general meeting heard an inspiring keynote address from CLA member and constitutional/rights expert, Prof George Williams, on why Australian needs and deserves a charter of rights and responsibilities.

In an associated development, for the first time CLA's website contains streaming audio, a recording of the address. If you missed the AGM, you can hear Prof Williams' talk at:

<http://www.cla.asn.au/rss08/080428001.php>

During the AGM, CLA President Dr Kristine Klugman announced a three-year campaign to raise substantial funds. She is targeting \$3.25m to establish a foundation which will be used to set CLA in a permanent, well-financed position, with appropriate paid staff. Dr Klugman said the fund-raising would be her major goal between now and 2011, and she expected not to nominate for President again in 2009.

For that reason, CLA is actively seeking a refreshing of directors and executive position holders: if you would like to consider serving, please contact the secretary. The next AGM will be held in April/May 2009, but it is planned that new directors to be formally elected at that time would gradually take on some work between now and then.

Anne Cahill-Lambert was confirmed formally as a Director of CLA by official appointment under the signature of the President, Dr Kristine Klugman. As part of updating the organisation's formal records, a foundation Director, Liz Shaw, is helping to analyse and streamline all CLA's files since inception.

CLA wrote to the Chinese Ambassador protesting the bullying and harassment by some pro-China supporters at torch relay event (including to CLA member Kate Beauchamp, who was pressed by a mass of bodies over a boundary fence). We also wrote letters to editors re CLA's position on relay protests, to warn police against over-reacting before the event and to praise police after the event for doing a good job.

Members were invited to make submissions on censorship, to help counter a formal write-in campaign by church groups. Many members have done so already...but there's still time.

CLA made a formal submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties in relation to extradition and the handling of criminal data exchanges with the United Arab Emirates.

This raised the question of committees and the Australian Parliament trying to suppress – in advance – people's right to publicise their position on important public issues. CLA contends that anyone or any organisation is free to publish a document it has prepared for submitting to a parliamentary committee: committee bureaucrats contend that such documents cannot be published (for example, on the CLA website) until the bureaucrats have read them, 'accepted' them and granted them privileged status. We are currently agreeing to disagree.

There were numerous radio interviews during April, including CLA's media spokesperson Dean Prail with Radio New Zealand on vague plans for Australia to spy on employees' emails, and our traditional 2XX appearances. We issued a media release comment on the same-sex couples issue.

Meetings were held with ANU students to plan on-campus activities, and we in the process of extending university groups to two new campuses.

President Dr Kristine Klugman, Treasurer Kevin Popple and CEO Bill Rowlings had a 45-minute meeting with Special Minister of State John Faulkner, on a range of issues covered in this newsletter.

A mini-meeting meeting with Father John Parsons and Director Anthony Williamson also helped plan for future key activities.

We continued our work on police car chases by meeting with Francis Rose and Ross Dunn, parents of the young women, Clea Rose, killed during a police chase. We are working with them through a detailed strategy to moderate police car chases by changing the police guidelines, improving education and refresher training of police, and fitting immobilisers to vehicles.

CLA's cartoon exhibition – *Laughing With Knives* – opened in Public Library, Goulburn, organised by CLA Goulburn member Fred Rainger. This is the first 'rural' outing for the exhibition, and it has demonstrated that it fits very well in a tight library venue.

At the end of the month, Dr Klugman and Director/Webmaster Lance Williamson met with ACT Attorney-General, Simon Corbell, to discuss formal police reporting and public interest disclosure rules and legislation, in relation to the ACT Policing and the Australian Federal Police.

Mr Williamson also attended the opening day of the Clarke/Haneef Inquiry, and reported on it. Please go to: <http://www.cla.asn.au/>



## Vics review equal opportunity in light of rights law

The Victorian Government is currently undertaking a broad review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic) to 'better promote the right to equality and improve protection from discrimination'.

It is also separately reviewing exceptions and exemptions in the EO Act to ensure consistency with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

The review process includes an options paper, detailing research findings and setting out options for reform. Responses are due by 12 May 2008.

Further information: <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/equalopportunityreview>.

## Charter's first year produces patchy progress

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission chair, Fiona Smith, said she was generally satisfied with progress on how the State's human rights charter was working after its first year, but there was room for improvement.

"Some government departments and local councils have actively embraced the Charter and its principles and are changing the way they operate to reflect their new human rights obligations," Ms Smith said. "But it is clear that we have a long way to go. "This is understandable given that this is a new consideration for public authorities and we do not expect to change the world overnight."

The report raises some concerns about the apparent lack of action by almost one-third of local councils. "We recognise that local councils have been inadequately resourced to prepare for the implementation of the charter and trust that this will improve."

At the time of reporting, the Commission had not received any response from the Department of Treasury and Finance regarding its charter-related activities.

The report also highlights a lack of transparency around decisions about the compatibility of new laws with the Charter. In 2007, the Parliamentary Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) raised concerns about the compatibility with the Charter of 23 Bills but only one was amended.

<http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/publications/annual%20reports/>

## Concerns raised as government demands universal tapping

The federal government is pushing a bill to force all telecommunications providers to facilitate lawful data interception across fixed and mobile telephone systems, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Instant Messaging (IM) and chat room discussions.

The new laws would enable police and security services to tap any number of communication devices based on taking out one solo warrant. Currently, they must seek a warrant for each device.

The Senate Legal and Constitutional committee is due to report today (1 May) to discuss the proposed changes to Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment Bill 2008.

The amendments build on previous reforms by the Howard government which required Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to implement wiretapping provisions – basically, no-one in Australia can send or receive an email without ASIO and/or the Australian Federal Police being able to read it.

Under separate Rudd Government plans announced last month, private organisations will be handed 'quasi-police' powers. Attorney-General Robert McClelland said business owners would be able to intercept employee emails without notice, allegedly in a bid to prevent cyber-terrorism.

These latest proposals are so vague and ill-considered they may die a natural death.



## Breach of rules on CCTV, Speaker admits

The NSW Parliament may have breached state and federal privacy laws by allowing its CCTV security footage to be used by State Treasury officials chasing a media leak, according to a legal expert.

Privacy lawyer Angus Henderson said government agencies were limited to using CCTV footage for the original purpose for which it was intended – in this case the physical security of the building and those who work inside it.

Independent NSW Speaker Richard Torbay later confirmed that a 'breach of processes' had occurred when Treasury officials were given the footage, shot outside a parliamentary theatre during a seminar on Treasury's corporate plan.

NSW Treasurer Michael Costa had ordered an immediate investigation by Treasury into a report that appeared in *The Australian*. The report, which quoted details from the seminar, revealed there was \$16.5 billion available for transport infrastructure spending in NSW between now and 2021, \$12.5 billion of which had been committed recently to a metro system for outer north-west Sydney.

Subsequently, NSW Treasury chief John Pierce issued a public statement clearing any Treasury official of leaking to the media. NSW parliamentary press gallery president Simon Benson said the use of CCTV footage to trace the source of a media story was "unprecedented in the history of this parliament and constitutes an unacceptable development".

It is amazing how quickly parliaments and governments can move to investigate issues related to whistleblowing and information freedom when they are the ones wanting the action, CLA observes. It is also amazing how no parliament/government officer is ever held accountable for acknowledged 'breach of process'.

– from an article by Imre Salusinszky, *The Australian*, 2 Apr 08

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23470181-5013945,00.html>

## Bins can put your weights up

Bin Brother is watching you, according to Jano Gibson, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Randwick City Council in suburban Sydney started replacing its 78,000 residential garbage and recycling bins recently, getting rid of old ones that seemed to work perfectly well.

The reason? A small, flat, circular object hidden under the rim of the new bin. About the size of a 10-cent coin, it carries the letters "TI-RFid" embossed on it, and is an electronic tracking device known as a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag.

The 90,000 bins in the Ryde local government area of Sydney were also fitted with them in 2006, under waste collection contracts with WSN Environmental Solutions, a state-owned company whose garbage trucks are able to weigh bins as they are unloaded on to the truck. The bin weight is then linked to the resident's address.

The technology, used to manage livestock, prisoners and cars passing through toll gates, has raised privacy concerns around the world. But the councils insist they are not spying on their residents' waste habits, or planning to use the technology to increase waste levies in the future. They say they are using the data to help identify areas where people are not recycling enough.

In 2006, then federal Communications Minister Helen Coonan launched an RFID privacy guide. Among its principles were:

- RFID tags should only be linked to personal information or used to profile customers if there is no other way of achieving the goal sought;
- individuals should be fully informed if personal information is collected using RFID tags;
- personal information collected using RFID tags should only be used for the specific purpose for which it is first collected, and destroyed after that purpose is achieved; and
- individuals should be able to disable or destroy any RFID tag that they have in their possession.

It appears that Randwick and Ryde councils may have breached all four principles, Australian Privacy Foundation chair, Prof Roger Clarke, said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2008/04/13/1208024990544.html>

## SmartGate controls your access to Australia

The \$62 million SmartGate biometric passport technology is going national for Australians and New Zealanders.

It will operate at Melbourne International Airport by the end of this month, and at five other international airports by the end of 2009, after opening at Brisbane in August 2007, and at Cairns in January.

SmartGate does customs and immigration checks on e-passports, using facial recognition technology to match a 'live' image of the traveller against a stored digital photo on a passport microchip. If the images match, you clear the control point; if not, you're referred to a customs officer for further examination, according to a Mahesh Sharma report in *The Australian*.

While it sounds like high-tech wizardry, the system has been plagued by false matches, as real-time performance has seldom matched marketing hype. It will be interesting to see how long it is before there's a need for 'temporary suspension for maintenance reasons'.  
– 8 Apr 08.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,23502567-5013040,00.html>



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## **\$10m extra to help legal services**

The Australian Government has announced one-off, additional funding of \$10 million for the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program.

The money will be allocated on a needs basis focusing on a centre's funding level, location and client demographics. The \$10 million adds to the normal \$22.6 million being provided to community legal centres.

A further one-off allocation of \$7 million has also been made for legal aid to help meet the most pressing needs in the system, including services in the area of family law, according to Attorney-General Rob McClelland.  
– A-G's media release, 18 Apr 08

**New G-G comes with human rights pedigree:** The new Governor-General-to-be, Quentin Bryce, comes with a pedigree of being a one-time Australian delegate to the UN Human Rights Commission. In 1965 she was the first female admitted to the Queensland Bar, and she was also the first female appointed to Qld University's law faculty. She has been Qld Director of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and takes up her new post in September from the position of Governor of Qld.

**10-point plans aims to improve NT intervention:** Modifying the NT intervention legislation to maximise protection of children from abuse without racially discriminating against Indigenous people is one of the major elements of a 10 point plan outlined in the Social Justice Report 2007 officially launched in Sydney on Monday. REPORT: Social Justice Report 2007: [www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/sj\\_report/sjreport07/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport07/)

**Plead early, and cut your jail time:** NSW is introducing a pilot scheme from today (1 May 08) to trade off reduced sentences for early guilty pleas. The 12-month trial, at two Sydney court complexes, will see offenders and their lawyers able to horse-trade an early plea to reduce a sentence by at least a quarter, but up to a third.

**Police investigative powers given to traffic 'cops':** The NSW State Debt Recovery Office is gaining powers to undertake its own investigations, instead of relying on police. The new mini-police force will chase up people who give false names for the person supposedly driving a car when a camera has recorded a speeding fine.

**Government to revamp Privacy Act:** The Rudd Government is ready to overhaul the 20-year-old Privacy Act and build a privacy regime to serve modern Australia, Special Minister of State John Faulkner told a business breakfast marking the 1988 introduction of federal privacy laws. Senator Faulkner said the government's approach to privacy reform would be based on the long-awaited Australian Law Reform Commission report, due for release this month or in June. ALRC details: <http://www.alrc.gov.au/> Faulkner's speech: <http://www.cla.asn.au/>

**Was Australia about to 'invade' Fiji?** Australia came within a whisker of 'invading' Fiji in December 2006, or at very least of occupying and defending parts of the capital, Suva, with SAS troops. We may have been saved such 'Deputy Sheriff in the Pacific' folly by a tragic helicopter accident. Read the Fiji Human Rights Commission's sober assessment for the full details, from a perspective external to Australia:

<http://www.mapw.org.au/resources>



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## **International:**

### **Controversial 'truth report' due to be handed down**

A controversial truth commission report into violence surrounding East Timor's historic 1999 vote for independence was due to hand down its report last month (April), but it has been delayed for a second time until shot ET President Ramos Horta recovers fully.

The Indonesia-East Timor Commission of Truth and Friendship (CTF), made up of five commissioners from each of Indonesia and East Timor (Timor Leste), will deliver its final report to the presidents of both countries about six months late.

The 370-page report comprises the commission's findings and conclusions since the process began in 2005. The report will be released in Indonesian, English and Portuguese after being read by the two presidents.

An Australian-led UN-backed military intervention force restored peace after the independence vote sparked a wave of violence by Indonesian-backed militia. Up to 1500 people died, hundreds of thousands had to flee, and about 70 per cent of East Timor's infrastructure burned to the ground.

Nobel Peace laureate Ramos Horta was shot by renegade soldiers loyal to Maj. Alfredo Reinado on the morning of 2 February 2008. Reinado was killed in the ensuing gunfight, and Horta was later flown to a hospital in Darwin, Australia, where he underwent a series of critical surgeries.

– JP/Dicky Christanto

### **Timor Leste faces urgent military trial/prison problems**

The shooting of Timor Leste President José Ramos-Horta by alleged military elements has the tiny nation facing legal and prison issues like those which produced Guantanamo Bay and unproductive trials of American forces over deaths of Iraqi civilians.

Four captured dissident soldiers are being held at a special site at Colmera, instead of the normal prison at Becora. The need to provide additional security during the post-shooting state of emergency is given as the reason.

TL Minister of Justice, Lucia Lobato, has said that establishing a military prison is a step towards establishing a military court. But the tiny, fledgling nation has no legislation covering either military prison or military court. The constitution allows the creation of a military court, and assumes a military prison, but there is little legal guidance about jurisdiction, composition or function.

The constitution indicates such a court would judge crimes 'of a military nature, at first instance'. But who is to investigate, and who is to lay formal charges before the court, and what are the appeal provisions, to what body?

"To meet with public approval, such a court would have to guard procedurally against claims that it dispensed special treatment to those in uniform," says Timotio de Deus, Director of the TL Judicial System Monitoring Programme.

"Special care would need to be taken to make certain that matters brought before a military court were properly investigated, and transgressions punished. Should this plan proceed, it must be ensured that the court does not veil abuses of power, but rather provides an avenue for legitimate public complaint," he said.

<http://www.jsmp.minihub.org>

### **40 convicted secretly in Myanmar/Burma, report says**

At least 40 protesters in Myanmar, including seven Buddhist monks, have been sentenced to prison after secret trials over last year's pro-democracy marches, Amnesty International reported last month.

In September, Buddhist monks spearheaded the biggest anti-government protests in Yangon in nearly 20 years, but the military regime violently suppressed the movement by opening fire on crowds and beating people in the streets.

Officially, more than 3,000 people were arrested during the crackdown. The junta says the vast majority have been released. But Amnesty said in a statement that at least 700 were still behind bars, and at least 40 of them have been sentenced to prison after secret trials. Its research found protesters had been convicted "for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly."

The UN has estimated that at least 31 people were killed during the crackdown. In addition to the 700 jailed protesters, Myanmar has another 1150 political prisoners held prior to the monks' marches in September.

Report: <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5i4eBQsLDV7G8X32Y8tSRgx7C7Ck9w>



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## **Journalist still held, uncharged; attacks on TV staff reportedly ease**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said last month that attacks against journalists and media workers at the state-owned Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) TV station had ceased since late March, but that fears were still held for an online journalist.

"There are grave concerns for the safety and well-being of J.S Tisseinayagam, the editor of [www.outreachsl.com](http://www.outreachsl.com), who has been detained since being taken into custody by officers of the Terrorist Information Department (TID) on 7 March," the IFJ said in a media release on 9 April.

Tisseinayagam was initially detained under emergency regulations for 30 days. On 1 April, the Colombo Magistrates Court granted a TID request to extend the detention order to 5 May, after the Supreme Court ruled against an application for bail on 31 March.

The IFJ says no charge has been laid against Tisseinayagam.

## **Driver, monk given life sentences over Tibet riots**

Seventeen people have been jailed over the most violent challenge to Chinese rule in Tibet for nearly two decades.

The sentences, handed down late last month and ranging from three years to life, are the first since riots that began on 10 March.

Soi'nam Norbu, 20, a driver for a real estate company, was convicted of arson and disrupting public services and given a life sentence. A monk, Basang, is alleged to have led a group, including monks, who destroyed a local government office and smashed or burned and looted 11 shops, attacking police in the process.

The official Xinhua news agency said that the intermediate people's court of Lhasa – a Chinese court in the Tibetan capital – handed down the sentences in open court.

China has said 22 people died in the riots. Tibetan exile groups say many times that number were killed in the uprising and ensuing crackdown.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/29/tibet.jailings>

## **Freezing terror suspects' assets 'unlawful'**

In an important constitutional development, asset-freezing orders imposed by the British Treasury on terror suspects were ruled unlawful by the High Court in London late last month because they bypassed parliament.

A judge said the regulations had escaped parliamentary scrutiny because the government had made them using Orders in Council, which empower ministers to make laws in the name of the monarch without needing parliamentary approval.

He said it was now time for parliament to be consulted on proper steps that could be taken to stop the funding of terrorist acts, while still protecting human rights as far as was possible.

The judge stressed that he was not saying that freezing orders could not be made to comply with UN resolutions. He said: "In my view it is essential that parliament considers the way in which what is required should be achieved."

Solicitors for the men issued a statement which said: "The ruling has shown that the government is willing to sacrifice the fundamental rights and liberties of its citizens, including the fundamental constitutional right that only parliament can take away basic freedoms, when they think it convenient to do so."

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/misc/print.php?artid=2224207>

## **Former A-G lambasts British Government over security**

Former Attorney-General, Lord Goldsmith, QC, delivered a scathing assault late last month on British Government plans to extend detention without trial to 42 days, warning that they would be seized on by misguided young Muslims as a justification to 'take up arms'.

In language stronger than any used during his time in office, he told MPs that the principle at stake was 'enormously important', adding that if still in government, he would vote against.

"When [dealing with] something as significant as individual liberty - which has been part of this country's background - you don't turn that away unless you are sure it is necessary; and not just because you think it might be desirable in the future."

The proposal, he added, was 'counter-productive'. "It sends a message, particularly to Muslim communities, that we've got a down on them, that this is another attack on them. And I...worry that some misguided young men will see this as a justification for taking up arms, as they see it, against us."

The plans for the extension from the present 28 days were not necessary or proportionate and did not contain adequate safeguards, Lord Goldsmith said.

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/law/columnists/article3806462.ece>



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## China should abide by its constitution

CLA and the International Federation of Journalists are calling on China to abide by its constitution, which permits free speech and appeals against criminal convictions.

Human rights activist Hu Jia was sentenced on April 3 to three-and-a-half years' jail and one year's denial of political rights for making comments to foreign media and publishing articles on Boxun, a banned Chinese-language website based in the USA, that were critical of China's record on democracy and human rights.

The Beijing Municipal Detention Centre effectively denied Hu the right to appeal by preventing access by his lawyer on the last day available to lodge the documents. According to Section 180, Chapter 3, Part 3, of the Criminal Procedure of the Chinese Constitution, all defendants have the right to appeal.

Hu's lawyer, Li Fangping, said that he was not allowed to see Hu on 13 April, which was the last possible day to lodge an appeal. – from IFJ media release, 16 Apr 08

## 27,500 believed to be on death row

A report by Amnesty, *Death Sentences and Executions in 2007*, says that last year at least 1,252 people were executed in 24 countries and at least 3,347 people were sentenced to death in 51 countries.

Up to 27,500 people are estimated to be on death row across the world, but the figures are rubbery because some countries hide the numbers. In China – the world's top executioner – the death penalty is classified a state secret, though Amnesty says at least 470 people were executed there in 2007.

Eighty-eight per cent of all known executions in 2007 took place in five countries: China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the USA. Saudi Arabia had the highest number of executions per capita, followed by Iran and Libya. <http://action.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/11957/>

## USA's prison culture tops the world's jail numbers

The USA has less than 5 per cent of the world's population...but almost 25% of the world's prisoners.

It has 2.3m criminals behind bars, more than any other nation, according to data from the International Centre for Prison Studies at King's College London.

China, four times more populous than the USA, is a distant second with 1.6m in prison (excluding hundreds of thousands of people in administrative detention). San Marino, with 30,000 people, has a single prisoner.

The USA has 751 people in prison or jail for every 100,000 in population. The only other major industrialized nation that even comes close is Russia, with 627 prisoners for every 100,000 people. The others have much lower rates: England's rate is 151; Australia's is 130, Germany's is 88; and Japan's is 63.

The USA, in fact, has relatively low rates of non-violent crime. It has lower burglary and robbery rates than Australia, Canada and England. A huge proportion of its prisoners are in jail for federal drug offences.

– from an article by Adam Liptak, NY Times, 23 Apr 08

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/us/23prison.html?ex=1209614400&en=26caf0c15ae6f5a3&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

## Jail inmate numbers hit record high in UK

The number of prisoners in England and Wales has reached a new all-time high of 82,319, a Prison Service spokeswoman said late last month.

The figure is up 139 on the previous record set in February. The number rocketed by nearly 600 in just three weeks – the equivalent of an average-sized jail. More than 2,500 new jail places would be delivered during 2008, she said.

## **Soldiers have rights to be well protected, British court says**

Sending British soldiers out on duty with defective equipment may breach their human rights, the High Court in England has ruled.

In a potentially significant verdict for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Mr Justice Collins ruled that a soldier "does not lose all protection simply because he is in hostile territory carrying out dangerous operations".

In another blow to the government, he rejected an attempt by the Defence Secretary, Des Browne, to stop coroners using phrases such as "serious failure" in inquests concerning troops who died on active service. Browne had argued this might prejudice subsequent civil action.

The judgment – which the Ministry of Defence said it would appeal – raises the possibility that families of soldiers killed on active service could sue the government for compensation. The soldier in question died from heat stroke near Basra, in southern Iraq.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/apr/11/army.ruling>



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## **First they came for the Muslims...**

US magistrate Sidney Schenkier has ordered the Department of Homeland Security to say whether eight plaintiffs with Middle Eastern or South Asian names and backgrounds are on the Terrorist Screening Database (TSD) watchlist.

All eight complain they have been repeatedly detained, sometimes by separation from their wives and children, and kept isolated for hours, at airports throughout America.

The judge will also look at FBI files and decide whether the eight may see them.

Federal authorities argue disclosure could compromise national security – the case may, through appeals, continue to wind its way through the courts for some time.

But the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented the plaintiffs, is declaring the judge's ruling a blow against what the group sees as the Bush administration's abuse of its 'state secrets' privilege.

One of the six, filmmaker Oussama Jammal, said that all Americans had a stake in the final legal decision: "We've discriminated against the Japanese and the Germans and the Irish and the Jews and the blacks. Now it's the Arabs and Muslims. We don't know who will be next," he said.

– supplied by Robert Briggs

## **Secret pact allows the US to spy on UK motorists**

UK Home Secretary Jacqui Smith secretly signed a 'special certificate' last year that gives foreign security agencies real-time access to traffic camera images and related data which monitors British motorists on UK highways.

Under the authorisation signed on 4 July 2007, video feeds and still images captured from roadside TV cameras, along with personal data derived from them, can be transmitted out of the UK to countries such as the USA, that are outside the European Economic Area.

Mrs Smith failed to mention the exception in a statement she made to Parliament, less than two weeks later on 17 July, outlining Metropolitan Police exemptions to the 1998 Data Protection Act.

The dispensation gives British police 'anti-terrorism' officers the permission to transmit images and information overseas, based upon any representation that the materials are relevant to a 'terrorism' threat either in the UK or elsewhere.

UK civil liberties groups are appalled that the UK government is monitoring the daily movements of British citizens on a wholesale basis, and even more so that it's willing to provide surveillance images and data to foreign intelligence agencies.

Opponents say the UK is a nascent surveillance state, and fear the imposition of 'data mining' to filter and correlate billions of pieces of data to profile individuals, activities and relationships in ways that might be abused, like targeting minorities and political groups and suppressing peaceful dissent.

A Home Office spokesman defended powers granted by the 'special certificate' on the grounds of counter terrorism and national security. Refusing to allow his name to be quoted, he said: "We would like to reassure the public that robust controls have been put in place to control and safeguard access to, and use of, the information," a report by Egan Orion said. – 21 Apr 08

<http://www.theinquirer.net/gb/inquirer/news/2008/04/21/quiet-pact-allows-spy-uk>

## How words can win the 'war'

You can call Islamist extremists lots of things, but do not call them: 1) jihadists 2) mujaheddin or 3) Islamofascists. And don't call al-Qaeda a movement, writes Al Kamen in the *Washington Post*.

He quotes *Associated Press* reports that agencies such as the US State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counterterrorism Center are telling their people not to describe Islamist extremists in those terms, according to internal documents. The reason for the change is tactical. Using such words, the administration now believes, may act to boost support for radicals among Arabs and Muslims by giving them a veneer of religious credibility or offending moderates.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/24/AR2008042403617\\_2.html?sid=ST2008042500201](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/24/AR2008042403617_2.html?sid=ST2008042500201)



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**California may end 'rot in jail' sentences for children:** The California Senate's Public Safety Committee has taken a historic step toward ending the practice of sentencing youths to die in prison, according to Human Rights Watch. The committee voted 3 to 2 in favor of the Juvenile Life Without Parole Reform Act (Senate Bill 1199), which would eliminate life-without-parole sentences for offenders under age 18. It would instead impose a sentence of 25 years to life, giving young offenders access to parole after 25 years if they show convincing evidence of rehabilitation.

[http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/08/usdom18477\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/08/usdom18477_txt.htm)

**Court upholds lethal injections:** The Supreme Court last month upheld the State of Kentucky's putting criminals to death by lethal injection, ending an unofficial moratorium in 35 other US states that have the death penalty. However, Justice John Paul Stevens, while concurring reluctantly with the judgment of the court, wrote that he now believed capital punishment itself was unconstitutional, and that the ruling might serve to reignite the debate over whether it should exist in the United States. - from UNity, UN Assn of Australia e-newsletter, 19 Apr 08

Report: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/us/16cnd-scotus.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/us/16cnd-scotus.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)

**US hands back Afghans for makeshift trials:** Dozens of Afghan men held by the USA in various prison camps are being tried in secretive Afghan criminal proceedings, based mainly on allegations forwarded by the US military. They are being convicted and sentenced to sometimes 20 years in jail in trials that typically run 30-60 minutes, according to human rights investigators who have seen the trials. One lasted barely 10 minutes, an investigator said. Witnesses don't appear in court and can't be cross-examined. There are no sworn statements. Instead, the trials appear based almost entirely on terse summaries of allegations forwarded to Afghan authorities by the US military. Afghan security agents add whatever evidence they can, but the cases generally centre on events that sometimes occurred years ago in war zones now completely cut off.

**Women's abuse cases double:** The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has reported 4,276 cases of women's rights abuses during 2007, more than double the 1,821 cases from the previous years. The report says 636 women became victims of honour killing, 731 were raped and 736 kidnapped.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7349167.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7349167.stm)

**Court refuses permission to deport:** A British appeals court last month refused to allow the UK Government's to deport national security suspects to where torture is endemic. In two appeal judgments from the Special Immigration Appeals Commission, the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) cited torture and ill-treatment in Jordan and Libya as grounds for barring the deportation of a Jordanian and two Libyans. It blocked the transfers despite 'memorandums of understanding' from the two governments that promised that suspects would not be tortured and would receive fair trials upon return.

<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/08/uk18478.htm>

**Pentagon sides with 'Bush the omnipotent' view:** A Pentagon legal memorandum approved the using harsh interrogation techniques against terror suspects on the grounds that President Bush's authority during wartime overrode any international ban on torture. A memo of 14 March 2003 outlines legal justification for military interrogators to use harsh tactics against al-Qaida and Taliban detainees overseas provided they did not specifically intend to torture their captives. It argues that poking, slapping or shoving would not give rise to criminal liability, and also appears to defend the use of mind-altering drugs that do not produce 'an

extreme effect'. Even if an interrogator harmed a detainee in a way prohibited as torture under international law, they would not be criminally liable because, the memo argues, the president's wartime power as commander in chief of the military is not limited by UN and other international treaties against torture. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/02/usa1>

**Taliban stone adulterous couple to death:** The Taliban have reportedly stoned a man and woman to death after they were found guilty of adultery by a tribal court in Pakistan's border region. The stoning was carried out in a tribal area on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan where the Taliban has a strong presence, according to the original report, in the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*. The killings are the first recorded incident of death by stoning by the militants, who usually put accused before firing squads, according to the *SMH*. <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/03/1206851052700.html>



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**Editorial Observer: *The Selling of the Judiciary: Campaign Cash in the Courtroom:*** "We put cash in the courtrooms, and it's just wrong," Sandra Day O'Connor, the former US Supreme Court justice, declared last month. Thirty-nine US states elect at least some of their judges. About 95 percent of cases are handled by state courts rather than appointed federal judges. The perception that money is corrupting the courts would be damaging enough. But often, it seems, special interests are finding that buying up judges likely to side with them in big-dollar cases is a good investment. – By Dorothy Samuels, *NY Times*, 15 Apr 08 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/15/opinion/15tues4.html?ex=1208923200&en=d19ded0a25cf3fd4&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

**US States attempt to limit guns:** States in the USA are proposing new laws to restrict guns, after a decade in which state legislative efforts have been dominated by gun advocates. Some 38 states are considering gun-related bills, with a focus on cutting gun access to convicted criminals and the mentally ill and on improving methods to trace guns used in crimes. They try to redefine the gun debate as a law enforcement issue, rather than one of gun ownership rights, to sidestep prickly Second Amendment concerns. *NYT*, 15 Apr 08 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/15/us/15guns.html?th&emc=th>

**Intelligence keeps plodding on:** Jacqui Smith, the UK Home Secretary, said last month that British intelligence was pursuing 30 different plots involving the tracking of 2,000 people in 200 networks. Critics pointed out that these figures did not appear to contain any new information. She was trying to justify extending detention without trial for terrorism suspects from 28 to 42 days. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/apr/14/terrorism.uksecurity>

**Comparing violent deaths in America:** In 2006, the number of US highway fatalities reached 43,000 victims while the national statistic for homicides through the use of firearms was 10,177. The US has about 200m legally-owned guns and about 250 million total motor vehicles. Statistically, it seems that motor vehicles are 3.5 times more deadly than firearms. – from a blog entry on the *NY Times* website, 16 Apr 08

**To Russia, with caution:** Travellers to Russia should be aware of the recently formed regulatory super-agency, Rossvyazokhrankultura (Russian Mass Media, Communications and Cultural Protection Service). The agency is insisting that users register any electronics that use the wi-fi frequency. As well as public hotspots, registration applies to home networks, laptops, smart phones and wi-fi-enabled PDAs. Registration permits use by the owner only, reports Matthew Broersma, from *Techworld.com*. <http://www.pcworld.idg.com.au/index.php/id;1146771381;fp;4;fpid;782452>

**Hu campaign launched:** The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), and the Hong Kong Journalists' Association (HKJA) have launched an online petition in support of jailed Chinese journalist Hu Jia. The Beijing No 1 People's Intermediate Court sentenced him on 3 April 2008 to three-and-a-half years' jail and one year's denial of political rights for "inciting subversion of state power". Hu, whose writings focused on the Chinese Government's record on human rights and democracy, was accused of accepting two foreign media interviews and publishing five articles from 2001 to 2007 on Boxun, a Chinese-language website based in the USA and banned in China. [http://www.hkja.org.hk/Host/hkja/UserFiles/File/other/petition\\_for\\_hujia.html](http://www.hkja.org.hk/Host/hkja/UserFiles/File/other/petition_for_hujia.html)

## **Books:**

CLA member George Williams' latest book is *Law and Liberty in the War on Terror*, A Lynch, E Macdonald and G Williams (eds), Federation Press, 2007 Paperback/272pp, ISBN 9781862876743, Australian RRP \$49.95. <http://www.federationpress.com.au/bookstore/book.asp?isbn=9781862876743>

*Review of Australian Bills of Rights: The Law of the Victorian Charter and the ACT Human Rights Act*, Carolyn Evans and Simon Evans, LexisNexis Butterworths, 2008, ISBN: 9870409324549, \$95. \_

<http://www.lexisnexis.com.au/aus/products/catalog/current.htm/B0596.asp?productid=B0596&jurisdiction=1&category=0&medium=book/2/3/4/6/7/8/9/11/1/&author=evans&title=&overview=Review+of+Australian+Bills+of+Rights>



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## **DATES**

**9-18 May, Fremantle:** Fremantle Artists For Peace Exhibition organised by MAPW in WA at Moore's Contemporary Art Gallery.

**24 May, Canberra:** *AboveBoard* public accountability forum, Curtin School, ANU, Inquiries: Matt Stevens on 0403 757 151. Register by email: [AboveBoard@anu.edu.au](mailto:AboveBoard@anu.edu.au) Commentators: Dr Allan Hawke, Melissa Parke MHR, Sushi Das The Age, Stephen Keim (Haneef's barrister).

**28-30 May, Italy:** 1st Identity in the Information Society Workshop: exploring the developing relationships between identity, security and privacy in an information-intensive society. <http://is2.lse.ac.uk/idis/index.html>

**29 May, Sydney:** Law, Morality and Sexuality seminar, Faculty of Law, U. Sydney, Rachel on 9351-0239 or [R.Miller@usyd.edu.au](mailto:R.Miller@usyd.edu.au) to register. Speaker: Dr Paul Johnson, U. Surrey, speaking on the UK Sexual Offences Act 2003, a milestone in English law with regard to homosexuality.

**30 May, Melbourne:** Law Inst Vic Human Rights conference, 9am-4pm, register: <http://www.cpd.liv.asn.au/product.asp?pid=1460&cld=15>

**16-17 June, Melbourne:** Human Rights Law and Policy conference, \$1560 (discounts available for NGOs and Indigenous organisations), details: [www.thomson.com.au/humanrights](http://www.thomson.com.au/humanrights)

**26 June, Canberra:** inaugural Kirby Lecture in International Law, by Prof. James Crawford of Cambridge U, evening. Contact details: see next item.

**26-28 June, Canberra:** *Security, Scarcity, Struggle: The Dilemmas of International Law* ANZ Society of International Law's 16th annual conference, National Museum of Australia; Details: <http://law.anu.edu.au/cipl/events.asp> E: <mailto:cipl@law.anu.edu.au>

**21-22 August, Brisbane:** UN Assn of Australia national conference, Parliament House, Brisbane. Sessions on climate change, life long education, governance, peace, conflict and resolution, human rights, sustainability and global compact. Info: UNAA Qld: [unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au](mailto:unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au) on ph/fax 07 32541096.

**3-5 September, Paris, France:** 61st Annual DPI/NGO Conference commemorating 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**12-13 September, Melbourne:** National Indigenous Legal Conference (and Ball), RACV Club. Info: Aislinn Martin (03) 9607 9474/ 0413 009 072; f 03 9607 9438; E: [amartin@liv.asn.au](mailto:amartin@liv.asn.au)

**19-20 Sept 2008, Dublin, Ireland:** Celebrating 60 years of the UDHR - conference explores how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) can contribute to education provision. Hosted by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Amnesty International Irish Section, and the Irish National Teachers Organisation. More info: [Brian.Ruane@spd.dcu.ie](mailto:Brian.Ruane@spd.dcu.ie)

**7-8 November 2008, Germany:** Social Web – civil society towards networked protest politics, University of Siegen. Drawing on concepts of associative, deliberative or participatory democracy, the conference will explore new internet opportunities through widening the scope for active public debates. <http://www.e-politik.de/blog/18032008/Social-Web-Towards-Networked-Protest-Politics.html>

**28-30 November, Canberra:** inaugural ACT Human Rights Arts and Film Festival. Contact Sarah Bassiuni for more info or to volunteer some time to help: 6267 2707

**2009:** 20 Feb, 2009: worldwide: World Day of Social Justice

**2010:** 10/10/10, World: Target date to start the CLA-promoted death penalty moratorium – 10/10 for Life.

**LAST WORD:**                    **Bush secrecy expands in US Budget**

The classified budget of the US Defense Department, concealed from the public except in outline, has nearly doubled in the Bush years, to \$32 billion.

This is more than the combined budgets of the US Food and Drug Administration, and the US National Science Foundation and the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The billions have expanded a hidden world of secret science and technology in which military units and federal contractors push back the frontiers of warfare, producing advanced jets, weapons and spy satellites, as well as notorious expenditure excesses, which occasional come to public attention.

US Budget documents tell little. This year, for instance, the Pentagon says Program Element 0603891c is receiving \$196 million but will disclose nothing about what the project does. Private analysts say it apparently aims at developing space weapons.

**LAST WORD 2:**                    **What rights do little green men have?**

The UN is being asked to request formal reports from several nations about flying saucers and little green men (and women, and children).

An historic UN General Assembly Decision concerning extra-terrestrial life and UFOs was adopted on 18 December 1978 that invited "Member States to take appropriate steps to coordinate on a national level scientific research and investigation into extraterrestrial life, including unidentified flying objects."

The decision further invited member states to "inform the Secretary-General of the observations, research and evaluation of such activities." Now it is time to report, a number of UFO-aligned NGOs believe.

The question arises: if alien life exists, does it enjoy 'human' rights?

<http://www.ufodigest.com/news/0408/civil-society.html>

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