

Avocats Sans Frontières

Newsletter 2003 - III

Dear reader,

Avocats Sans Frontières is very pleased to send you the third edition of its newsletter.

The past few weeks have seen important progress in the establishment of a permanent office of Avocats Sans Frontières in Israel and the Palestinian Territories and have confirmed the momentum towards a further expansion of our activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We hope to report more fully on these new developments in our next newsletter, which you should receive towards the end of November.

In its continued effort to ensure the relevance and quality of its activities, Avocats Sans Frontières has hired an external evaluator to evaluate its activities in Burundi. With the evaluation mission accomplished and the first oral feedback already received, Avocats Sans Frontières is now waiting for the final report of the evaluator. This report will undoubtedly be of great help in determining our strategy in Burundi for the coming three years.

Avocats Sans Frontières is also in the process of hiring new staff. Two recently opened post are the Head of Mission post for our office in East Timor and the post of project officer for the same mission. If you are interested in finding out more about these two vacancies, do not hesitate to visit our website at www.asf.be. We are also in the process of hiring a volunteer journalist to write our newsletter. If all goes well, he or she should be in charge of writing the fourth edition of this letter.

Happy reading!

*Peter Van der Auweraert
Director*

Timor Leste

On the 29th of August, the East Timor Bar Association was established in the presence of 35 lawyers, which practically comprises the whole of the East Timor practicing private lawyers from the AATL (Asosiasaun Advogado Timor Lorosa'e). This first objective was achieved with the collaboration of the Asian Foundation and the Vice-Minister Abrantes, who equally contributed to the implementation of this first project.

On the 24th of September, the Legal Documentation Centre was officially opened in the presence of the Minister for Justice, Domingos Sarmentos, the Vice-Minister Manuel Abrantes and Mr Colombo, representative of the E.U., our main donor in Timor, as well as representatives of the international community.

In September, the Public Defenders attended the first module of their training programme, prepared by Priscila Beltrame, who is responsible for this project. The subject matter was civil procedure. Priscila Beltrame also went to the Oecussi enclave, where she met with the local Public Defender.

Rwanda

The political context...

One month after the presidential elections of the 25th of August 2003, which were won by President Paul Kagame, the legislative elections in Rwanda were held and qualified by the media as the “first real multi-parties parliamentary election since independence”. The electoral campaign commenced on the 6th of September and the elections were held on the 29th, 30th of September and the 2nd of October. These parliamentary elections, which followed the adoption of a new Constitution by referendum in May put an end to the transition period, which lasted 9 years in Rwanda. The coalition of the Rwandese Patriotic Front won this election with 73% of the votes. The remaining three political parties share the remaining seats, with no seats left for independent candidates.

The Return of the Judiciary from the summer break

Due to the elections, the new judicial year started on different dates in the four courts of appeal existing in Rwanda. The start of the judicial year was marked by an increased anxiety amongst the Rwandese judiciary due to the planned reform of the Rwandese justice system.

General state of the mission

The start of the judicial year was also the occasion for Avocats Sans Frontières in Rwanda to convene its brainstorming meeting in the town of Kibuye, between the 11th and 14th of September. During these days, ASF was able to reflect on the state of their activities both past and present and to establish its action and strategic plans for the future.

Seminar “a critical analysis of jurisprudence of the genocide case law”

Avocats Sans Frontières also organised a seminar for judges to critically discuss and analyse the national case-law relating to the genocide; the seminar was held between the 22nd and the 27th of September 2003. On this occasion, our fourth volume of jurisprudence was distributed to the participants of this seminar, in French and Kinyarwanda.

Burundi

The good news of the month has been the promulgation of the law decentralising the criminal chambers before the *Tribunaux de Grande Instance*. This law radically transforms the Burundese justice system and has great significance for the activities of Avocats Sans Frontières in Burundi. Following a request by the Minister of Justice, Avocats Sans Frontières will :

- train 60 judges from the local courts who will be promoted following this judicial reform.
- organise regular retraining over a period of two years, for judges of the *Tribunaux de Grande Instance* (TGI).
- re-start a program of judicial assistance with a team of expatriate lawyers associated with Burundese lawyers.

On the 13th of September, the team welcomed Tanguy Deblauwe, a Belgian lawyer, who for one year will be the co-ordinator of the training and jurisprudence programs.

During the last week of the judicial holidays, the mission was visited by Jean-Jacques Badidanga, the Program Coordinator for Africa. His mission had as objective to start the development of a strategic plan for the coming three years.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Great news concerning our activities: the mission of ASF has begun its activities in East Congo!! Between the 15th and the 20th of September in Kisangani, a seminar for retraining the judges of the Eastern Province (21 members of the courts) was organised. This activity was welcomed with enthusiasm: "if ASF brings us this project with the participation of the central authority, then the reconciliation is real...." The judges were extremely happy to benefit from this retraining program and would like to organise this type of program three to four times a year.

ASF has made many contacts with civil society, in particular NGOs and other associations working in the field of law and justice. So far, the meetings have been very promising.

Israel/Palestine

After one year spent working with ASF in Israel/Palestine, Dianne Luping, our Head of Mission, left Palestine for pursuing new objectives and endeavours. We wish her success for the future.

As regards the setting up of a permanent mission in Israel/Palestine, the progress to date includes the launching of the recruitment process for a new Head of Mission, as well as a follow-up mission to Jerusalem by headquarters staff.

International justice

- Between the 14th and the 17th of October, in Bujumbura, ASF organised a seminar on the international justice mechanisms relevant in the context of Burundi and addressed to lawyers of the Bar Association of Burundi.
- With regards to the setting up of an international justice program, the contacts and reflections are going well. The main objective and priority for ASF at present is to ensure the receipt of sufficient funds to commence more regular activities in this field.

ASF NEEDS YOU !

ASF has to urgently increase its free reserves. This important goal can only be reached with your help. Only your generosity will ensure the association's long term survival. Make a donation to ASF. All cash donations equalling or exceeding thirty Euro are tax-deductible in Belgium.

**Bank account: ING/Private fund 630-0227491-85
IBAN: BE99 6300 2274 8185 - BIC : BRUBEBB
Mention: gift - campaign "free reserves" 2003-2004**

There are also other ways to help ASF:

- **Become a member of ASF and regularly receive the ASF newsletter (40 Euro/Year - Bank account: ING/Private fund 630-0227491-85 - IBAN: BE89 6300 2274 8185 - BIC : BRUBEBB - Mention: "membership 2003-2004") ;**
- **Regularly consult our website (www.asf.be) to find our regularly updated vacancies for volunteers, interns and regular staff.**