

Avocats Sans Frontières

Newsletter 2004 - III

June 2004

Dear reader,

This fourth newsletter of 2004 will probably reach you just before the summer holidays, at least here in Europe. Avocats Sans Frontières wishes a nice holiday for those amongst you who plan a holiday abroad or at home. The secretariat here in Brussels and the field projects will keep on functioning during the summer months, with a less complete staff however.

ASF is finishing the 2003 year report. As soon as the report is finished it will be presented on the web-site. ASF announces you that, concerning the external communication, it has been selected to compete for the Solidarity Prize of De Standaard. This means that there will also be a free ASF advertisement in the 19 July edition of this Flemish newspaper.

Enjoy the reading,

*Peter Van der Auweraert
Executive Director*

Timor Leste

Our Timor team has been strengthened by the coming of a new member, who will be assisted by Shelly Wieck during his training period. Joao Travolta is a lawyer and has a rich experience in development work.

An important part of our work is looking for funding. In order to obtain this funding, Teresa Benedict, head of mission, maintains contacts with potential sponsors. USAID, the World Bank and UNDP now know our projects.

In this context, she met delegates from Forum-Asia and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court. During these discussions, the compliance of the Timorese legislation with the Rome statute and other international treaties were put on the agenda.

Women's access to justice is one of our major focus points. Therefore, ASF is represented within several committees which look into this matter.

We continue to strengthen our collaboration with the Timorese Bar. In this context, ASF collaborates with the Timorese Bar Association Transitional Administration Body for a long term strategy and the drafting of a Code of Ethics.

Mid-June, we will hold our exchange programme with the Malaysian Bar Association. That will be the base for an action plan to further develop the Timorese Bar Association.

Rwanda

During the month of May, tensions raised between Rwanda and the DRC. Former rebel movement DRC-Goma launched an attack on Bukavu, and was probably supported by the Rwandan government.

The verdict about the trial of the former President Pastor Bizimungu was postponed to 7 June.

The judicial reform is going on steadily. The recruitment process for magistrates and the Prosecutor's office already started.

ASF keeps on following the "Gikongoro" trial and still provides financial support to the Kigali Bar Association, in order to secure the defence of the accused. (See previous newsletters for more details).

In the so-called Case Akimana Celestin, the verdict has already been pronounced in May. Three accused were sentenced to death, one of them was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment.

The distribution of the Fifth volume of the "*Recueil de Jurisprudence du Contentieux du Génocide*", the Compilation of Genocide Jurisprudence, has been accomplished. At present, all the judicial actors, university students, concerned political instances and civil society's actors of Rwandan civil society have this Recueil.

We also distributed this Compilation at the event of a conference, which was organised by the European Union about the Great Lakes region, that took place from 12 to 14 May.

Our training project for the sectorial Gacaca judges runs well. With the co-operation of the "*Service National des Juridictions Gacaca*", we are designing the necessary didactic tools. The new *Gacaca* bill has been presented to the Parliament for further study.

In June, *Gacaca* jurisdictions should be spread out to the entire country.

Burundi

In Burundi, ASF is pursuing its juridical assistance programme for victims of the ethnic conflict of October 1993.

The former exclusive competence for the three Court of Appeal has now been extended to 17 Courts of High Instance. Since the situation has become relatively calm again in Burundi, we are trying to expand our activities to the whole country.

In May, the verdict regarding the four Rwandans accused of holding up a bank was pronounced. The four accused were sentenced to death and therefore, risk to be executed.

Concerning the murder of the World Health Organization representative in Burundi, ASF has appointed an expatriate counsel from Liege for the defence of one of the accused. On 11 May, the case has been pleaded at the Appeal Court of Bujumbura. This latter is currently dealing with procedural questions raised by the defence.

In the meantime, our radio programme about Victims and their Rights is still broadcasting. In this framework, we are working together with several local organisations.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The main activity in the DRC was the organisation of a "recyclage" training session for the magistrates of Goma, Kalemie, Beni and Kindu and the inauguration of the law shop in co-operation with the AFEAC, Women Lawyers' Association of the DRC, in the commune of Kasa-Vubu. The aims of the law shop are the vulgarisation of the law and the promotion of the legal mechanisms of conflict resolution.

Finally, the agreement of the DFID was obtained concerning the mobile tribunals. An exploratory mission is being organised to Kananga. The aim of this mission is to gather information for the mobile tribunals, to mobilise for it and for the next training session for magistrates. As this mission is the first to the province *Kasai Occidental* the opportunity will be taken to present ASF to the provincial authorities and to explain the forthcoming activities of ASF in their region.

Concerning the project of "Vulgarisation of the Transition" ASF has made a co-operation offer to RENADHOC, the *Réseau National des ONG de Droits de l'Homme Congolaises*, but they have declined the offer for the reason that they don't have the means to do the necessary sensibilisation.

The meetings with the Canadian development agency , which seems to be very interested in ASF's action plan , are pursued.

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: BE89 6300 2274 8185 - BIC : BRUBE
Mention: gift - campaign "free reserves" 2004**

There are also other ways to help ASF:

- **Become a member of ASF and regularly receive the ASF newsletter (40 Euro/Year - 20 Euro for students - Bank account: ING/Caisse Privée 630-0227491-85 - IBAN: BE89 6300 2274 8185 - BIC : BRUBE - Mention: "membership 2004") ;**
- **Regularly consult our website (www.asf.be) to find our regularly updated vacancies for volunteers, interns and regular staff.**