

Human Rights in Latvia in 2000

Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies

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Preface

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (LCHRES) prepared and published this report on *Human Rights in Latvia in 2000* with funding from the Open Society Institute (Budapest). While we are grateful for this and other support given to the LCHRES in 2000, responsibility for the views expressed is solely ours. The LCHRES is a member of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) and some of the material below will also appear in abridged form in the IHF Annual Report. However, as we wanted to reach a broader audience in Latvia and the region, for the third year in a row we decided to publish this lengthier overview in three languages: English, Latvian and Russian.

We do not claim to provide a full picture of human rights issues in Latvia in 2000. The material below reflects our specific areas of expertise and what in our view are the most topical issues in Latvia. The focus is on civil and political rights, though we do touch on social, economic and cultural rights in the sections on women's rights, the mentally ill, the rights of the child and patient's rights. We do not analyse the housing crisis - an urgent social problem that affects the human rights of many of Latvia's most vulnerable residents. Fortunately, there are a number of effective tenant's rights organisations working throughout Latvia.

We did not insert footnotes throughout the Report, as this would have been too cumbersome. Occasionally, we refer to the source in the text. However, we used a wide variety of source materials in preparing this Report, including media reports and information provided by individuals, other NGOs and international organisations working in Latvia. We also relied on official data and documents from various government ministries and departments.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our other donors and partners in 2000. The Council of Europe, the Swedish Institute, and the United States-based NGO Freedom House supported a bilingual television series on integration broadcast in late 1999 and early 2000. The Swedish Institute has granted support for two policy-related research projects – one on Latvia's response to the challenge of extremism, another on the gender aspects of social integration. The former work is in print, the latter should be completed by mid-2001. We would also like to thank the US-based NGO Mental Disabilities Rights International for fruitful cooperation.

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Introduction

The primary human rights problems in Latvia in 2000 were closely related: severe backlogs in the court system and long pre-trial detention periods, especially for minors. In 2000 Latvia also witnessed the mobilisation of small groups of Latvian and Russian racist extremists, but law enforcement agencies responded vigorously. The core positive developments in 2000 were in the legislative arena. Parliament liberalised the Law on the Constitutional Court to allow individuals to complain to Latvia's most progressive, but under-utilised judicial body. After considerable controversy, the Cabinet also adopted implementing regulations to the 1999 Law on the State Language which are essentially in conformity with Latvia's international obligations.

Judicial System and Domestic Safeguards

Severe backlogs in the court system threatened the right to a fair and speedy trial in Latvia. For example, as of October, of 1721 persons in pre-trial detention whose cases had been submitted to the courts, 541 had been in prison for more than a year, but 111 had not had their cases reviewed for more than two years. By early March the Department of Courts of the Ministry of Justice had received 174 complaints concerning the work of judges and half of those were about lengthy delays in reviewing cases in the Riga Regional Court. By the autumn, judges in this Court were forced to schedule hearings for 2002 and even 2003. 1371 civil cases submitted in 2000 were not reviewed during the year because of the backlog, of which 1270 were in the Riga Regional Court.

The delays are caused partly by chronic under-funding, leading to a shortage of personnel and lack of premises. The Riga Regional Court employs 36% of all regional judges who have to review 56.8% of all cases submitted to regional courts. Towards the end of the year, the Ministry of Justice increased the number of judges by 8, including 3 for the Riga Regional Court. Another reason for the delays is the absence of legal norms in criminal procedure setting time limits for the review of cases. In 2000 the authorities once again failed to adopt a new Criminal Procedure Code, the drafting of which was begun in the end of 1990.

In a positive development, in 2000, for the first time since the restoration of independence, the Ministry of Justice budgeted significant funds (Ls 40,000 ~ USD 67,000) for the training of judges. Heretofore, international donors had funded almost all judicial training.

On 30 November the Saeima (parliament) adopted progressive amendments to the Law on the Constitutional Court to broaden the scope of those eligible to submit applications. Until the changes, eligible applicants included the president, no fewer than 20 parliamentary deputies, the Cabinet of Ministers, the plenum of the High Court, the Council of the State Control, the National Human Rights Office and city councils. From its creation in mid-1997 to mid-2000, the Constitutional Court received only 44 applications. The new amendments permit private individuals to submit complaints in cases of violation of their basic rights. However, private individuals will be able to

complain only about a legal norm and not about the unconstitutionality of a court verdict or act of public authorities, thereby limiting the importance of the change. The Constitutional Court will have the power to determine the constitutionality of the norm in question or to recognise it as not being in force, but the plaintiff will have to turn to a regular court again to seek redress when an unconstitutional norm has been applied. Lower courts will also be able to submit applications in cases when they believe that the legal provision to be applied in the case pending does not comply with a legal norm of higher force.

Torture, Ill-Treatment and Misconduct by Law Enforcement Officials

At the beginning of the year, the Interior Ministry released data on disciplinary measures taken against Ministry staff in 1999. The total figure of those punished was close to 4000 - a 5 percent increase from 1998. In 1999, 60 Interior Ministry personnel were detained or imprisoned for committing criminal acts, of which 28 cases involved accepting bribes. Interior Minister Mareks Seglins has urged harsher penalties for errant police officers, noting that "there were 102 cases in which police staff were driving an automobile under the influence of alcohol, but only 40 lost their jobs: this situation undermines the prestige of the police." The total figure of Interior Ministry personnel punished for various transgressions in 2000 was 3184, a decrease of 14% compared to 1999.

Police violence and misconduct continued to evoke concern in 2000, as did the punishments levied on errant officers, which were often mild, if they were levied at all. For example, on 2 February, a youth turned to the 21st Riga police office with a request for assistance in retrieving two stolen lats. His claims to have been beaten by the police were corroborated by physicians, who found physical signs of ill treatment. A criminal investigation ended inconclusively, though the victim has expressed the intention of appealing. On 8 November 2000 the Kurzeme Regional Court found two former Liepaja Municipal police inspectors, Aigars Prusis and Janis Fugalis, guilty of beating and humiliating three minors. However, the Court handed down very mild punishments - two-year suspended sentences.

A number of instances of misconduct were reported in the Ogre Municipal Police, suggesting a pattern of problems. In January three police officers were arrested by the Office for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption (Latvian acronym- ONKAB) after they were found to have attempted to illegally fine an inhabitant, to have issued invalid receipts for fines and to have been "careless" about disposing confiscated contraband liquor. In the summer of 2000 ONKAB submitted evidence to the Ogre Prosecutor's Office about three other Ogre Municipal Police officers. ONKAB charged them with having arrested two persons in February, driven them seven kilometres from Ogre into the woods, partially stripped them, and left them in minus 5 degree temperature. However, the Ogre District Court returned the case to the prosecutor's office for additional investigation and, by year's end, the case had not yet been reviewed.

In a number of cases, police officers were found to have driven into and seriously injured civilians. In April a Liepaja police car hit a woman pedestrian, who ended up in the

hospital with light injuries. On 1 September a Riga Criminal Police car hit a 13-year-old, who ended up in the hospital with a concussion and a broken leg. On 30 October a Cesis Traffic Police officer was found to have driven into and seriously injured a 50 year-old man and left the scene of the accident. While the officer in question lost his job, the Cesis region Traffic Police Chief acknowledged that four of 12 inspectors in his region had committed serious crimes in 2000.

At the beginning of the year, the General Prosecutor's office conducted a review of criminal cases completed in the final quarter of 1999. A review of registered criminal acts in 11 Latvian districts found 32 cases in which the local prosecutor or police official had unjustifiably refused to initiate criminal proceedings. For the period in question, a total of 9845 criminal acts were registered, but authorities decided to not initiate criminal proceedings in 44% of all cases. The Riga court district prosecutor discovered several cases involving the sexual exploitation of children that police had unjustifiably failed to pursue. While declining to specify the number of such cases, chief prosecutor for the district Janis Drobisevskis noted that the cases in question were being investigated.

In early autumn the leadership of the Latvian Prison Administration fired four prison guards who had beaten up prisoners in Central Prison. The guards have appealed the decision in court and a hearing has been scheduled for early spring 2001.

On December 13 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decision to make public the report by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture on Latvia's closed institutions. On 20 December, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers also approved Latvia's nominee to the Committee – Angelita Kamenska of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies.

Conditions in Prisons and Detention Facilities

The large number of prisoners, the high-percentage of remand prisoners and their conditions, and the incidence of disease in prisons remained serious problems, as did the fact that seven of Latvia's 15 prisons continued to be guarded by army conscripts at year's end. At the end of 2000 the total number of prisoners was 8831, an increase of only 16 persons compared to 1999. However, the overall incarceration rate rose from 354 to 373 per 100,000 respectively. The huge and growing number of persons in pre-trial detention continued to evoke concern. Of the total prison population, 3864 or 43.7% were awaiting trial. Of particular concern was the large number of minors in pre-trial detention (see also the section on Rights of the Child). Of the total 327 minors in prison at the end of the year, 193 or 59% were in pre-trial detention.

Latvia's legislation on remand prisoners does not envisage any easing of the regime for those who have already been sentenced by the courts, but have appealed the decision. These prisoners continue to remain in cells for 23 hours a day and most are denied contact with the outside world, despite the fact that many of them remain in remand prisons for up to two years. In early October ten prisoners in Matisa Prison went on a hunger strike demanding a more rapid review of their cases in courts.

The widespread incidence of tuberculosis and HIV among prison inmates continued to evoke concern. At the end of the year, 301 prison inmates had tuberculosis, though over the year a total of 474 persons within prisons were found to have active tuberculosis. Compared with 1999, the number of prison inmates with tuberculosis decreased by 60. However, a total of 187 first time patients were diagnosed, of which 95 or 51% became ill in prison. At the end of the year, 197 inmates had HIV, though the tally for the year as a whole was 290. 86% of the cases are intravenous drug users.

Conditions in Latvia's 28 short-term police detention centres (*izolators*) evoked concern as well. In a meeting with National Human Rights Office Director Olafs Bruvers on 1 November, State Police Chief Juris Reksna acknowledged that several of the detention centres would have to be closed because there is no funding for repairs. The Prosecutor's office has already warned the Dobele police that their detention centre would have to be shut down unless repaired. The State Police acknowledges that detention centres in Ventspils, Balvi, Daugavpils, Liepaja and Jelgava are in critical condition as well. The police have not received 1.2 million lats (~USD 1,967,000) requested for repairs over the previous two years.

Freedom of Religion (and Conscientious Objection)

Throughout 2000 several conscientious objection cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses against the State Military Conscription Centre continued. Three cases were concluded, as the plaintiffs became ordained clergymen (who are exempt from military service) and the Conscription Centre freed them. Three other cases were pending at the end of the year, including the appeal of Robert Nemiro, which was scheduled for February 2001. After a successful lobbying effort on the part of the NGO Centre, in September 2000 the Defense Ministry created an inter-ministerial working group to draft a law on alternative service by summer 2001.

Protection of Minorities

On 22 August 2000 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a packet of eleven implementing regulations under the State Language Law passed in December 1999. The regulations are critical, as they elaborate in detail the circumstances under which the government can regulate language use in society, thereby impinging on the rights of persons belonging to minorities to use their own languages, the right to private life and freedom of expression. The regulations cover issues such as the circumstances when translation into Latvian must be provided at conferences and demonstrations, when private organisations are required to provide information in Latvian alongside other languages on publicly displayed signs, and the Latvian language requirements for various posts in the public sector. In a press statement issued on 31 August 2000, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep stated that the regulations were "essentially in conformity with both the Law and Latvia's international obligations," that "virtually all of my recommendations were accepted by the Government," but that "specific matters will have to be reviewed upon Latvia's anticipated ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities."

In amendments to the regulations passed by the Cabinet of Ministers on 21 November 2000, the government listed those professions in the private sector subject to Latvian language regulation. The list is brief and contains 34 categories, almost all of which can be termed as proportionate and falling within a legitimate public interest (public health, public safety, public order). The list includes various health care professionals, guards and security-related professions, as well as notaries and sworn advocates. One profession on the list is difficult to justify as falling within a legitimate public interest – taxi drivers. How the regulations are implemented will be critical from a human rights point of view. Legal challenges to the justifiability of various provisions are likely and should pose an important test for the State Language Centre, which has previously demonstrated considerable zeal in punishing violators of language legislation in the private sector.

In the state sector, numerous problems had become apparent in implementing the provision that state and municipal institutions may receive documents only in Latvian or with a notarised translation. For example, the courts, the Department of Citizenship and Migration Affairs and other official bodies systematically returned correspondence to prisoners who had written letters in Russian. Around 2/3 of Latvia's prison population is Russian-speaking and the state does not provide free language training or translation services. Thus, in Central Prison prisoners sent around 12,000 petitions, complaints and requests in 2000. Of those, only 1/3 were in Latvian. The Riga City authorities warned the Riga Children's Rights Protection Centre about accepting documents in Russian. By refusing to accept such communications, the authorities may be in violation of Article 104 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right of each individual to address state and municipal institutions and receive a reply. One solution has been found in Daugavpils, where the City Council hired a full-time translator to assist members of the public prepare documents in Latvian.

The year 2000 saw little progress towards implementation of the social integration policy framework, which lays out the goals and means for minority policy in realms such as civic participation, education and culture. By year's end, the government had not yet adopted the National Programme for the Integration of Society. After numerous delays caused by political infighting at the highest levels, on 29 December 2000 the inter-sectoral management group submitted the final draft programme to the Ministry of Justice, which will be responsible for presenting it to the Cabinet for approval in early 2001.

Some progress towards creating implementing institutions and allocating funding did take place. On 14 November the Cabinet decided to allocate 16,239 lats (~ USD 26,500) from the 2001 budget to create a three person Integration Department within the Ministry of Justice to oversee implementation of the programme. On 14 November the Cabinet also referred to Parliament a draft law on the creation of a Social Integration Fund through which government and donor money is to be channelled to support integration-related projects. At year's end, the draft law was being debated in parliamentary commissions, where it was criticised for being incompatible with the forthcoming law on state agencies. Despite the uncertain fate of the draft law, on 14 November the Cabinet also decided to reserve 200,000 lats (~USD 325,000) from the 2001 discretionary budget of the Ministry

of Finance towards the Fund. It is unlikely that this sum will actually be allocated from this budget line in 2001, as it represents the lion's share of the discretionary budget. In November the Minister of Justice also created an advisory council on social integration issues which met several times to discuss the draft programme, the draft law on the Integration Fund, and the work of the new Integration Department.

A number of integration initiatives at the municipal level also deserve mention. In April the city of Ventspils adopted its own integration programme and created a non-citizen's advisory council, whose members actively participated in the work of the City Council during the remainder of the year. The Liepaja city government established an "integration promotion working group" in 2000 which prepared a draft city integration programme. By year's end, the city council had not yet approved the programme, but it did hire an integration project coordinator. The Aizkraukle Social Integration Council registered itself as a non-governmental organisation in late October and works primarily with youth on integration projects.

On 11 May the Saeima rejected a draft bill to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which Latvia signed in 1995. Only 15 deputies voted for ratification, 21 were against and 52 abstained. While deputies mentioned a number of technical obstacles (e.g. the quality of the translation of the convention, the absence of a minority definition), the real obstacle is the incompatibility of a number of legislative norms, particularly in the realm of language policy. Turkey and Latvia are the last remaining EU-candidate countries that have not ratified the Framework Convention.

In 2000 the European Court of Human Rights declared admissible an important case from Latvia involving an allegation of discrimination on the basis of language. The plaintiff is a former candidate for parliament who was barred from running for office in 1998 because of insufficient knowledge of the state language. Article 5 paragraph 7 of the Law on Elections to the Parliament states that persons are not be included in candidate lists and not eligible to stand for election if they have not mastered the Latvian language at the third (highest) level. The plaintiff has claimed a violation of Article 3, protocol 1 of the Convention on the right to participation in conjunction with Article 14, which prohibits discrimination.

Citizenship

On 1 July 2000 the number of stateless "non-citizens" in Latvia was 568,195 or 23.9% of the total registered population. Despite liberalising amendments to the Law on Citizenship passed after a referendum in October 1998, the naturalisation rate for non-citizens remained quite low in 2000. While the number of persons granted citizenship through naturalisation increased from 12,427 in 1999 to 14,900 in 2000, the higher figure in the latter year merely reflects the time lag from point of application to receipt of citizenship. The total number of applicants actually fell from a high of 15,183 in 1999 to 10,692 in 2000. Experts attribute the leap in 1999 to the backlog of ready applicants who had previously been kept from naturalisation by the age brackets or "window system"

abolished in late 1998. The abolition of the visa-free regime for travel to Russia by Latvia's "non-citizens" as of 1 January 2001 will remove one of the few advantages enjoyed by non-citizens and will probably facilitate adoption of Russian Federation or Latvian citizenship.

Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination and Hate Speech

Throughout 2000 Latvia witnessed increased activity by both Latvian and Russian racist extremists and a more energetic response by law enforcement agencies. On 29 May the Riga Regional court handed down a verdict in the trial of 9 members of a neo-Nazi group called "Perkonkrusts" (Thundercross). They were found guilty of attempting to blow up the Victory Monument on three occasions, blowing up a hot water main, assault, inciting national hatred and other crimes. Two members of the group received three-year prison sentences and three others were released in the courtroom, as they had already served the 1 to 2 ½ years to which the court sentenced them. Four other members, including the group's elderly ideologue Vilis Linins and two minors, were given suspended sentences. The founder and head of the group, Juris Recs, faced a separate trial, as he had successfully evaded the authorities until early May, when he was detained. In late December the Riga Zemgale district court found Recs guilty on six counts (including incitement of national hatred) and convicted him to three years in prison.

The court also imposed a considerable civil penalty, requiring the defendants to pay the Riga City Council Ls 21,000 (~USD 35,000) for the cost of repairing the monument and close to Ls 3000 (~USD 5000) to the company Riga Heat for the damaged hot water main. At the end of the year, the first 9 Perkonkrusts members had submitted an appeal to the High Court and a decision was expected in early 2001. Throughout the investigation and trials, the right-wing weekly "Latvietis Latvija" (A Latvian in Latvia) published appeals to donate money to help Perkonkrusts members, whom the paper called "patriots of the Latvian people" and "political dissidents." The fringe paper, which is sold freely in kiosks throughout the capital, regularly features racist and anti-Semitic articles. The publishers also have a home page (www.home.parks.lv/latvietis), which has a link to the Holocaust denial site created by Ernst Zundel in the United States.

In 2000 the existence of a Latvian neo-Nazi youth group in Liepaja came to light. In late 1999 and early 2000 the group published three issues of a newsletter called "Patriot" as well as a Latvian translation of an American anti-Semitic satirical cartoon book called "Tales of the Holohoax." The newsletters are filled with adulation of the interwar Latvian Thundercross organisation and Nazi Germany, as well as violently racist and anti-Semitic articles commenting on "Jew imperialism," the "Holocaust myth," the anti-Semitic staple the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and so forth. One article in issue 3 compares Jews to ticks and suggests that both should be burned. On 28 September, Liepaja authorities filed criminal charges against the publisher of "Patriots" Guntars Landmanis for inciting national hatred. A trial is scheduled for January 2001.

In January the "Latvian Regional Organization of Russian National Unity," a neo-Nazi group modeled on a similar group in Russia, published the first issue of an underground

newsletter entitled “Za Russky Poryadok” (For a Russian Order). In a piece deriding the sympathy of some Latvians for the Chechen cause and rumours of volunteer mercenaries, an anonymous author suggests “if someone wants to fight with Russians, there is no need to go so far. WE ARE ALREADY HERE!” In an article entitled “To Whom Do the Baltics Belong” the author asserts that in 1940 “our fathers once again returned here and only took back what has always belonged to Russia by right”. Other articles refer to the influence of “Zionist capital” on the Latvian media. On 12 May Evgeny Osipov, the leader of the organisation, was fined Ls 100 (~USD 166) by the Liepaja court for breaking regulations governing the registration of social organisations.

On 14 April the authorities permitted official registration of the social organisation “Victory Society” (in Russian – “Obshestvo pobedy,” in Latvian – “Sabiedriba uzvara”), a front for the National Bolshevik Party (NBP), a self-styled “revolutionary Russian nationalistic party” modeled on a similar party in Russia. After registration, the group began to issue a newspaper “Tribunal,” which has printed a number of articles glorifying violence. For example, issue No. 4 has an article about the telecommunications monopoly entitled “Lattelekom should be bombed.” A number of articles deride the so-called “Holocaust business”. In August the authorities launched criminal proceedings against “Tribunal” editor Vladimir Linderman and publisher Olga Morozova for propagandising violence and inciting national hatred. In early September the Riga Centre district court gave NBP activist Aijo Benes a two-year suspended sentence for hooliganism after he was caught writing “Kill [former prime minister Andris] Skele! NBP” on a wall in Riga.

On 14 November four NBP activists from Russia entered Latvia illegally by jumping off the St. Petersburg-Kaliningrad train. Though they were apprehended within 24 hours, on 17 November another three NBP activists from Russia barricaded themselves in St. Peter’s Church in Old Riga and threatened to blow themselves up with a hand grenade unless their political demands were met. After several hours, they gave themselves up to the Latvian authorities. Though the hand grenade turned out to be fake, on 28 November the authorities filed criminal charges of terrorism against the three. A local NBP activist, Vladimir Moskovtsev, was also detained and charged with abetting illegal border crossing.

On 4 June the main television news program “Panorama” aired a news story about a woman who had swindled jewels and a substantial sum of money from a young girl, who then attempted to commit suicide. The perpetrator was alleged to have been of Roma origin. The journalist concluded the piece by drawing the “lesson” that “it is best not to look in the eyes of Roma” as they have hypnotic powers. Further, a police officer appealed to all Roma in Latvia to assist in recovering the jewels. The Roma National Cultural Society and Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Social Affairs protested against the programme as contributing to negative stereotypes against Roma. The head of the news division at Latvian TV apologised to Roma for the broadcast and expressed the intention of devoting some special programs reflecting Roma culture and traditions.

In August the mainstream financial magazine “Kapitals” featured an anti-Semitic cover story entitled “Jews Rule the World.” The term used throughout the article for Jew was “Zhids,” which was the Jewish self-designation before World War II, but is now considered insulting by the Jewish community, which prefers the term “Ebrejs.” The cover featured a drawing resembling a Nazi-era caricature: a bearded, hook-nosed figure embracing a globe. While the article ostensibly sought to describe the contribution of Jews to economic and cultural life, it also contained “historical material,” including a rendering of the Holocaust in which much of the blame is attributed to Jews themselves. The article evoked strong condemnation by the Latvian authorities and the mainstream media, prompting the publishers to fire the magazine’s editor. The prosecutor’s office began an investigation of whether the article violated Latvian legislation prohibiting incitement, but no conclusion had been reached by year’s end.

A sociological survey commissioned by the National Human Rights Office in January sheds interesting light on public perceptions of human rights violations and discrimination. A total of 24% of all respondents (18% of all Latvians, 31% of all non-Latvians) claimed to have experienced discrimination in the last three years. The two most commonly mentioned realms were labour relations and social services (respectively 47% and 24% of all who claimed discrimination). When asked for the reasons for the violation of their rights, respondents mentioned ethnicity and language most frequently (respectively 28% and 24% of all who claimed discrimination). Ethnicity was most frequently mentioned by non-citizens (43%) and non-Latvians (40%). Similarly, language was most frequently mentioned by non-citizens (37%) and non-Latvians (36%) as well.

Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

For the first time, a resident of Latvia who had received refugee status in a State party to the 1951 UN Convention attempted to return to Latvia to resume his residence. Andrejs Vesnins, a former resident of Latvia, had received refugee status in Russia on 4 January 1995. In July 1999, Mr. Vesnins returned to Latvia with a visa obtained at the Latvian Consulate in Pskov and in August attempted to obtain a residency permit. The Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board refused his request, indicating that “upon the end of his visa period A. Vesnins must leave Latvia” and arrive at the Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board to annul his Population Register stamp in his passport (the basis for annulment: “emigrated”). In September Mr. Vesnins received a departure order, but on 4 October submitted a request to the Refugee Affairs Centre. The Centre refused his request for refugee status as “manifestly unfounded,” declaring its decision final and not subject to appeal. On 13 October 1999 Mr. Vesnins was detained and placed in the Gaizina St. Illegal Immigrant Temporary Detention Centre, where he remained until mid-2000.

On 18 April a first instance court reviewed Mr. Vesnins complaint about the Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board and requested that the departure order be rescinded and his Population Register stamp be renewed. The court rejected the complaint, noting that the plaintiff’s return to Latvia is regulated by Latvian legislation, not the UN conventions and

international law invoked by the plaintiff. It should be recalled, however, that Latvia ratified the 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 protocol on refugee status on 19 June 1997. The plaintiff's appeal to the Riga Regional Court was scheduled to be reviewed in December 2001, but in late 2000 he was deported back to Russia.

On 15 December 2000 the Immigration Police deported to Russia two persons who had deserted from the Russian Army, requested asylum in Latvia and were awaiting the outcome of an appeal. The deportation was unlawful, as Article 20 of the Law "On Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the Republic of Latvia" holds that a person is to be considered an asylum seeker during the review of an appeal.

In July a new NGO called the Latvian Association of Foreigners was created with the goal of assisting and advising foreigners, refugees and asylum seekers in Latvia. One of the founders was Haisam Abu Abda, one of only 7 persons to have received refugee status in Latvia. The organisation seeks to assist in family reunification, promote integration into society and facilitate the movement of refugees between the three Baltic states.

War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

In a controversial case, the Latvian High Court decided in late April to release from custody Vasily Kononov, a former "Red Partisan" leader accused of war crimes during World War II, and referred the case back to prosecutors for supplementary investigation. Kononov had been accused of participating in an attack on Mazie Bati village in which nine people, including a pregnant woman, were killed in 1944. In January a lower court found Kononov guilty and sentenced him to six years in prison. Soviet authorities had decorated Kononov for his actions and throughout the legal proceedings, Russia championed his cause, accusing Latvian authorities of punishing him for being an anti-fascist. The testimony of both Kononov and witnesses had been filled with contradictions, and questions arose about whether all the victims could be considered non-combatants. In justifying its decision, the High Court pointed to a number of procedural violations in the pre-trial phase and in the first instance trial. After his release Kononov adopted citizenship of the Russian Federation. The case is likely to return to court in 2001.

Throughout 2000, the government took a number of steps towards bringing to justice alleged World War II Nazi war criminals as well. In February and September the Latvian government hosted meetings of war crimes investigators from Australia, Canada, Britain, Germany, Israel and the United States. At the meetings participants compared evidence against Konrads Kalejs, an 87-year-old citizen of Australia who was a commanding officer with the notorious Arajs Kommando in Nazi-occupied Latvia, and other possible targets of investigations. In March the general prosecutor's office initiated criminal investigations against both Kalejs and Karlis Ozols, another member of the Arajs Kommando now residing in Australia. In December the Latvian General Prosecutor requested Australia to extradite Kalejs to Latvia to stand trial on war crimes charges. In late December the Australian media reported that Kalejs intended to fight the extradition

order in the courts and that the appeals process could last up to two years.

Women's Rights

In the realm of women's rights, the most important developments were the drafting of new policy documents and legislation and the initiation of anti-discrimination litigation. At the end of 2000 the Ministry of Welfare commissioned the drafting of a Framework Document for the Promotion of Gender Equality which should be submitted to the Cabinet in early 2001. The document analyses the current situation, the costs of inaction, and suggests policy measures and institutional innovations.

On 19 May 2000 the parliament adopted several amendments to the Criminal Code that criminalise trafficking in human beings in connection with sexual exploitation. Article 165.2 defines trafficking/sending to a different country as any activity that facilitates legal or illegal departure from the country or entry into the country, transit or stay in a foreign country. The amendments came into force on June 1. Article 165.1 foresees deprivation of liberty for up to four years in cases of sending of a person with his/her agreement to a foreign country for the purpose of sexual exploitation. If the same activities are committed for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, the punishment may be up to ten years of imprisonment, with possible confiscation of property. If these activities are committed by an organised group or committed against a minor, the punishment may be for a term from eight to fifteen years of imprisonment with confiscation of property. Subsequently, the first criminal case of trafficking was initiated.

In March 2000 the parliament decided to renew the Vice Squad, which is responsible for investigating crimes linked to involving people in involuntary prostitution, trafficking in human beings, pandering and child pornography. While the parliament initially planned to allocate funding for 21 police officers as of July, a budget shortfall led to the postponement of implementation until January 2001.

According to data from the Immigration Police, over the year a total of 273 women were deported to Latvia, including 118 from Germany, 53 from Great Britain, 22 from Denmark, and 21 from Switzerland. The real number of women going abroad each month for illicit purposes is estimated to be in the hundreds.

Until now, Latvia has lacked legislation on reproductive and sexual health. For example, the legal basis for abortion is governed not by law, but merely by a Welfare Ministry order No. 77 of 1993. On 19 October 2000 the parliament reviewed the first reading of a new draft law on sexual and reproductive health. The draft law delineates two types of abortions: a "medical abortion" performed due to medical and social indications and an abortion performed as a result of a woman's choice. The draft law also includes regulations for artificial fertilisation and the legal status of the child. The current version of the draft law defines a heterosexual couple or a woman as the subject of artificial fertilisation, though another article says that "potential parents are a heterosexual couple." Thus, it is still unclear whether the rights of lesbians and single women will be respected. A questionable provision holds that when a patient who has not yet attained

the age of 18 wishes to terminate a pregnancy and there is parental disagreement, the Custody Court has the final say.

In February, for the first time in Latvian legal history, a female employee won a court case against an employer for gender discrimination. The facts of the case are as follows. Dagmara Abramova, an employee of a printing company called Latgales Druka, had her labour contract amended in 1999. As a result, she was prohibited from fulfilling seven duties she had been able to fulfill previously and her wage was five times smaller than that of her male colleagues. The first instance court in Rezekne recognised the labour contract as invalid and required the employer to pay 2791 lats (USD 4,175) compensation for wages not received for 12 months. In its ruling, the Rezekne court referred to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which has been ratified by Latvia. On 19 May the employer successfully appealed the decision of the Rezekne court in the Latgale regional court. After the Latgale regional court overruled the initial decision, the plaintiff appealed to the High Court, which referred the case back to the Latgale regional court for a new hearing. On 1 November 2000 the Latgale regional court ruled in Abramova's favour.

Rights of the Child

Long pre-trial detention of minors remained a serious human rights concern in 2000. At the end of the year, 327 minors were in Latvia's prisons, of whom 193 or 53% were in pre-trial detention. At the end of the year, Brasas remand prison had 182 minors, of whom 67 had been in detention for up to 6 months, 44 for 6 months to a year, 45 from 1 to 2 years, and 26 got more than 2 years. This is in stark violation of Article 37, Paragraph (b) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that "the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child (...) shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time".

On 9 March the parliament amended the Children's Rights Protection Law to require the Justice Ministry to "ensure that the work of the courts is organised such that cases linked to the defense of children's rights or interests are reviewed on a priority basis." However, the amendments do not set a time limit by which cases involving minors must come to trial or appeals must be reviewed, which is one of the main reasons for lengthy periods in remand prisons. In a letter to a minor X. on remand whose case was first tried in December 1998 and who inquired about the date of his appeal, the Riga Regional Court wrote in May 2000 that no date had been set. The letter noted that "the date of the appeal hearing will be announced to you in a timely manner." This is not an isolated case.

According to data from the Prison Administration, 6 minors in Brasas attempted suicide in 2000, of which 2 ended in death. Prison officials point to long pre-trial detention periods as the main cause of suicide. Two-thirds of all minors on remand are prohibited from writing to or meeting with their relatives. Moreover, overcrowding is a serious problem. In late autumn, 170 adult prisoners on remand were transferred to Brasas Prison from Central Prison. As a result juvenile remand prisoners who were previously placed in 32 cells are now placed in 21 cells. In several cells the number of juvenile prisoners has

increased to 12, thereby leading to more frequent conflicts among prisoners.

An extremely dated regulation from 1994 “On the Procedure for Keeping Suspected, Imprisoned and Convicted Persons in Interior Ministry Remand Prisons” remains in force, and does not envisage any state-funded educational activities or social rehabilitation programmes for minors on remand. However, Article 3 of the Law on Education guarantees every resident of Latvia “equal opportunities to acquire education” and Article 4 states that “the acquisition of primary education (...) until the attainment of 18 years of age is obligatory.” Point 72 of the regulation states that “the administration of a remand prison is entitled to organise all manner of educational events.” There are only 2 prison officials involved in working gainfully with the 180 minors on remand. The lack of constructive activity and the harsh restrictions on contacts with the outside world cannot be justified for minors and those on remand for lengthy periods.

An amendment to the Children’s Rights Protection Law adopted on 9 March provides that, until new adoption regulations enter into force, “a child may be adopted abroad if that country is bound by an international convention envisaging the protection of children’s rights and cooperation in inter-state adoption, or if Latvia has signed a bilateral treaty with the country on legal cooperation in the field of adoption.” On 16 March the Saeima ratified the European Convention on the Adoption of Children, though by year’s end parliament had yet to amend the Civil Law to bring it into conformity with the convention.

In April, with the entry into force of amendments to the Children’s Rights Protection Law, a new procedure governing children’s travel across national borders was introduced. In order to leave the country, children were required to possess a notarised authorisation from their parents or guardians. If one parent was not accessible, the authorisation had to be obtained from an Orphan’s Court. However, at the frontier, authorisations were also demanded of children whose parents had divorced or one of whose parents was either dead or unknown. These demands restricted the child’s freedom of movement and created severe problems at frontier crossings until the new procedure was suspended in mid-May.

At year’s end, a wide public debate on conditions in Latvia’s child care home’s erupted after the NGO “Save the Children” publicised allegations of abuse in several homes. After a review and investigation, the prosecutor’s office filed criminal charges of violence and cruelty against three employees (including the director) of the Aleksandrova special school in the Kraslava district. Another case involved a home in Liepaja, where “Save the Children” alleged that the elder children sexually abused younger ones and violence was common. However, local education authorities claimed that the demarche by “Save the Children” had disturbed the children and undermines harmed an ongoing criminal investigation. For its part, the State Centre for the Protection of Children’s Rights responded to over 2000 inquiries during the year regarding information about legal norms, complaints about violations, and social problems caused by financial need.

Rights of the Mentally Ill

On 21 July 2000 the Welfare Ministry approved a Psychiatric Assistance Strategy for the period 2000 through 2003, though no funding has been allocated to implement the strategy. This is the first policy document since the restoration of independence to lay out guidelines and priorities in mental health care. It is included in the National Programme for Integration into the European Union, as the European Commission's Progress Report on Latvia had indicated problems in Latvia's mental health care system.

The strategy calls for supporting the integration into society of mental patients as close to their place of residence as possible, a reduction in the number of beds in mental hospitals, and the creation of multi-disciplinary teams to develop rehabilitation services, such as supported employment centres and halfway houses. It also lists a large number of priority target groups: patients with severe mental disabilities, criminals with mental disabilities, children and juveniles, young patients with schizophrenia, patients who are both mentally ill and drug dependent, and geriatric patients with mental illnesses.

The first litigation concerning a patient's rights in psychiatry was initiated at the beginning of the year. The complaint is about a patient's access to his medical record and the right to information about the diagnosis and treatment, which the plaintiff has tried to obtain for 20 years. In 1967 Alberts Sirmulis was diagnosed with schizophrenia and he attempted to appeal this decision several times. Subsequently, on numerous occasions he attempted to obtain a copy of his medical record with the aim of submitting it to an independent review body. However, all the mental health institutions involved – the Strencu, Jelgava, and Riga mental hospitals, as well as the State Psychiatric Centre refused to grant the former patient a copy of his medical record.

With the assistance of the Legal Clinic at the University of Latvia, a complaint was filed in March 2000 against the Ministry of Welfare, which oversees mental hospitals. The plaintiff invoked the "Law on Medical Treatment," the "Law on Access to Information," and provisions guaranteeing the right to private life in the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. On 28 September 2000 the Vidzeme District Court reviewed the case and found no wrongdoing on the part of the Ministry. Mr. Sirmulis filed on appeal to the Riga Regional Court on 31 October 2000.

Patient's Rights

The funding crisis in health care as well as the deaths of a number of patients due to error on the part of medical personnel drew attention to serious problems in the area of patients' rights in Latvia. Patients may turn to the Welfare Ministry's Medical Care and Work Ability Expertise Quality Control Inspection (Latvian acronym – MADEKKI), which can levy fines on medical staff up to 150 lats (~ USD 245) or request the Latvian Physicians Society to annul a license. In 2000 MADEKKI received 256 complaints, of which 25 were linked with the death of patients (in 1999, 48 such complaints were registered).

Patients may also defend their rights in courts, but trials tend to be lengthy and expensive. In a case that continued throughout 2000 and prompted widespread public debate, a patient named Filipsons who had had a back operation in 1997 was rendered disabled. In 1999 MADEKKI asked that the surgeon in question, Egils Strauss, be stripped of his license, but the Physicians Society refused. Filipsons sued the surgeon, but on 17 January 2000, the Riga Regional Court denied his request for compensation. This was the first case in which the compensation demanded was sizeable (45,983 lats or USD 75,000), a factor that evoked considerable debate about the need for reforming health insurance and introducing malpractice insurance. At the end of the year, Filipsons appealed his case to the High Court, which is set to review it in early 2001.

In 2000 the health care system was hit with a serious funding crisis. In June the Oncology Centre appealed to the public for assistance, as the state had not allocated the needed funding to replace essential equipment. In the autumn, a funding crunch also led several hospitals to refuse admittance to patients.

The LCHRES Legal Aid Programme in 2000

LCHRES staff lawyer Sandra Garsvane has provided free legal aid to victims of human rights violations since the spring of 1999. While accepting all cases, the LCHRES has especially solicited those involving abuse, misconduct and ill-treatment by law enforcement authorities. The legal aid consists primarily of providing information about relevant legislation or regulations, an individual's rights, which state agency to turn to and how to formulate documents, such as official letters, complaints, etc.

As can be seen in the table below, 117 persons turned to the LCHRES for legal aid in 2000, which was fewer than the total of 165 in 1999. This probably does not reflect any fundamental changes in the human rights situation, but merely the growing availability of other sources of legal information and advice.

The largest category of complaints (33) involved law enforcement agencies. In this category, 10 complaints involved the police (unjustified arrest, police violence, exceeding official authority), 3 involved the prosecutor's office (refusal to file criminal charges), and 9 concerned the courts (delays in reviewing a case). However, an additional 4 complaints concerned the right not to be subjected to torture and 7 complaints from former prisoners concerned the right to humane treatment and respect for dignity of the person.

The second largest category of complaints (26) concerned social rights and social welfare, of which 9 concerned former prisoners who complained about violations of their rights to social assistance and 5 about problems with receiving pensions or social welfare payments. A number of complaints (12) involved housing rights. The most frequent problems were unjustified evictions and conflicts with landlords.

A topical problem remains the right to address state institutions and receive a reply. The LCHRES received 9 complaints in this realm, of which 3 were about the National Human Rights Office, 3 about various municipal governments and 3 were about the Department of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. An additional 6 complaints about the Department of Citizenship and Migration Affairs concerned legalisation of residency status. 3 complaints concerned children's rights, while 40 other cases concerned a variety of issues.

While the LCHRES does not specifically ask clients their ethnicity, we do have a record of the language – Russian or Latvian – in which they submitted their complaint. 72 complaints were in Russian and 45 were in Latvian. The gender breakdown of clients was 64 women and 53 men.

LCHRES Legal Aid by Issue Area in 2000

Issues	Oral Complaints	Written Complaints	Total
1. Right to liberty and security of the person			
A. In Police Institutions	9	1	10
B. In the Prosecutor's Office	3		3
2. Right to a fair and public trial within a reasonable time	7	2	9
3. Right to humane treatment and respect for human dignity			
A. In places of detention	4	3	7
B. In mental hospitals			
4. Freedom from torture	4		4
5. Legal status of the person			
A. Legalisation of non-citizen's status	6		6
6. Right to housing			
A. Eviction	2		2
B. Conflicts with landlords	3		3
C. Resident's registration	1		1
D. Other	6		6
7. Right to social welfare			
A. Pension or social assistance	2		2
B. Social guarantees	3		3
C. Ex-prisoners	7	2	9
8. Right to have one's complaint reviewed and to receive a response from a state institution			
A. National Human Rights Office	3		3
B. Dept. of Citizenship and Migration	3		3
C. Municipalities	3		3
9. Rights of the Child	3		3
10. Various	26	14	40
TOTAL	95	22	117

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies: Activities in 2000

Introduction

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (LCHRES) was founded in 1993 as a not-for-profit, non-partisan non-governmental organisation devoted to monitoring human rights and ethnic relations, policy advocacy and research, human rights education and training, and providing legal aid to victims of human rights violations. The LCHRES is a member of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, a network of human rights groups operating in the OSCE region.

In 2000, the LCHRES received core funding from the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute and project grants from the Council of Europe and the Swedish Institute. The core staff of the LCHRES consists of director Nils Muiznieks, deputy director Angelita Kamenska, senior researcher Ieva Leimane and staff lawyer Sandra Garsvane.

Publications in 2000

Sandra Garsvane, "Cilvektiesību pamatvertības – informācijas pieejamība un varda brīvība – vides aizsardzībai" (Basic Human Rights Values – Access to Information and Freedom of Expression for Environmental Protection) in Padomdevejs žurnalistu un vides aizsardzības speciālistu sadarbībai (Guidelines for Cooperation Between Journalists and Environmental Specialists), Riga, *VAK žurnāls Vides vestis*.

Angelita Kamenska and Ieva Leimane, "Latvia" chapter in Women 2000: An Investigation into the Status of Women's Rights in Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States, Vienna, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights.

Angelita Kamenska, Ieva Leimane and Sandra Garsvane, Eiropas spīdzināšanas novēršanas komiteja: vadlīnijas slēgta tipa iestādēm (The European Convention on the Prevention of Torture: Guidelines for Closed Institutions), Riga, Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies.

Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, "Human Rights in Latvia," in *Veja zvani* (Wind Bells), journal of the American Latvian Youth Association, No. 49, Fall 2000.

Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, "*Kur griezties pēc palīdzības*" (Where to Turn for Help), brochure on institutions providing information on human rights and legal assistance, in Latvian and Russian.

Ieva Leimane, "Needs Assessment on Mental Health in Latvia," paper commissioned by the Soros Foundation – Latvia," October 2000.

Nils Muiznieks, “*Galejibas vienojas kopeja dziesma,*” (Extremes Join in a Common Song) *Diena* 21 October 2000.

Nils Muiznieks, “*Jaunie miti par nepilsoniem,*” (New Myths about Non-Citizens) *Diena* 8 June 2000.

Nils Muiznieks, “*Sabiedribas integracija, pie mums un citur pasaule*” (Social Integration in Latvia and the World), *Latvijas vestnesis* 7 June 2000.

Nils Muiznieks, “The Struggle Against Racism and Xenophobia in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends, Obstacles and Prospects,” background paper for the Regional Seminar of Experts on ‘The Protection of Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups and Strengthening Human Rights Capacity at the National Level’, UN document HR/WSW/SEM.2/2000/BP.1, 30 June 2000.

Nils Muiznieks, “Susceptibility to Racism and Xenophobia in Central and Eastern Europe,” Runnymede’s Quarterly Bulletin, The Runnymede Trust, December 2000, No. 324.

Nils Muiznieks, “*Vajadzigi jaunpilsoni*” (New Citizens Are Needed), *Jauna avize* 7 December 2000.

Organisation of and Participation in Seminars and Conferences

9-11 March, Nils Muiznieks assisted the British Council in planning and organising an international conference in Riga entitled “Building on Diversity in a United Europe.”

16 March, Nils Muiznieks gave a presentation on “Minority Rights Legislation in Latvia” at an international symposium in Riga on “The Protection of National Minorities in Eastern Europe” organised by the Eurofaculty in cooperation with the University of Regensburg, FRG.

26 April, Sandra Garsvane organised a seminar in Riga on “Legal Aid for Victims of Human Rights Violations: Opportunities in Latvia” attended by 30 persons from all over Latvia.

29 April, Nils Muiznieks gave a presentation on “Models for Implementing Social Integration Programmes: International Practice” at the Ventspils Social Integration Forum.

2 June, Nils Muiznieks gave a presentation entitled “Social Integration in Latvia and the World” at a seminar for parliamentary deputies entitled “Social Integration in Latvia – From Idea to Implementation” organised by the Latvian Ministry of Justice.

6 June, Ieva Leimane gave a presentation on “Media Portrayal of Refugees” at a seminar on refugee rights organised by the Swedish Refugee Council in Riga.

29 June, Angelita Kamenska gave a presentation on “Human Rights and Human Development” at the launch of the UNDP 2000 Global Human Development Report in Riga.

July-August, Sandra Garsvane gave presentations on “International Human Rights Norms and Access to Environmental Information” at a PHARE seminar on “Human Rights and the Legal Framework for Access to Environmental Information in Latvia: Theory and Practice” for municipal officials, media and environmental activists in Valmiera, Jelgava, Rezekne and Liepaja.

27 September, Angelita Kamenska was a panellist at a roundtable discussion on human rights and ethnic relations in Latvia organised by the Danish Cultural Institute in Riga on the occasion of a visit by a high-level Danish delegation .

18 December, Ieva Leimane organised a seminar in Riga on “Mechanisms for Defending the Interests and Rights of Mentally Ill and Mentally Retarded Persons” together with Mental Disabilities Rights International.

Work with the Media

January through March, Nils Muiznieks served as fund-raiser, creative consultant and occasional guest expert to the weekly bilingual TV broadcast aimed at youth “Domkrats” which aired 26 one-half hour episodes.

9 March, Ieva Leimane appeared on Latvian TV discussing the LCHRES annual report on human rights.

1 April, Nils Muiznieks gave a lecture on “An Introduction to Minority Rights: the Latvian Context” to an audience of journalists at a seminar on minority rights organised by the Latvia Human Rights Committee in Riga.

9 May, Nils Muiznieks gave a presentation on “Topical Human Rights Issues” to a seminar of journalists in Kuldiga on “Human Rights in the Kurzeme Region” organised by the Tukums Branch of the Human Rights Support Network.

1 July, Angelita Kamenska was interviewed on language policy in the Russian daily *Vesti segodnia*.

18 July, Nils Muiznieks was interviewed on language policy in *Lauku avize*.

24 August, Nils Muiznieks organised a half-hour television programme on Latvian TV-1 entitled “Anti-Semitism in Latvia: How Serious a Problem?”

26 September, Nils Muiznieks was interviewed on language policy, civil disobedience and inter-ethnic relations in *Vesti segodnia*.

24 November, Nils Muiznieks was chairman/moderator of an international conference entitled “The Role and Responsibility of the Press in New Democracies” organised by the newspaper *Diena* to commemorate its 10th anniversary.

14 December, Nils Muiznieks was interviewed on extremists in Latvia in *Respublika*.

From 1 January through 31 December, Nils Muiznieks was cited 21 times by the largest daily *Diena*, 14 times by the second largest daily *Neatkarīga Rita Avīze*, 7 times by The Baltic Times and interviewed about 15 times by Latvian radio and 15 times by various television stations (including Latvian TV, LNT, BBC, Euronews, and ORT).

Academic Lectures

Sandra Garsvane was a guest lecturer on International Human Rights at the “Attistiba” School of Social Work and Social Pedagogy for 5 mini-courses throughout the year.

15 May, Nils Muiznieks gave a lecture on minority rights to the Riga Graduate School of Law.

26 October, Sandra Garsvane gave a lecture on prisoners’ rights to the Jelgava Prison Administration.

21 November, Sandra Garsvane gave a lecture on the European Convention on the Prevention of Torture to Jelgava Prison officials.

4 August, Nils Muiznieks gave a lecture on human rights in the Baltic States at Vidzeme University College at the Baltic International Summer School.

Participation in International Events

3-5 April, Nils Muiznieks participated in a seminar on “Combating Racism, Xenophobia and anti-Semitism” organised by the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office of the European Commission in Soesterberg, the Netherlands.

9-14 May, Sandra Garsvane went on a study visit to Denmark devoted to children’s rights and issues of adoption organised by Vladimir Weissman, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights East European coordinator and adoption specialist.

11-12 May, Ieva Leimane attended a seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania called “Beijing +5: Achievement and Perspectives” organised by the government of Lithuania and the Women’s Issues Information Centre and gave a presentation on domestic violence.

16-21 May, Nils Muiznieks had a Foreign Office visit to the UK which included a programme of meetings and participation in a Ditchley Foundation Conference entitled “Making Multicultural Societies Work,” at which he gave a presentation on legal and educational strategies for promoting multiculturalism.

22 June, Ieva Leimane attended a meeting in Budapest organised by the Open Society Institute on establishing a regional mental disability advocacy centre.

25-29 June, Nils Muiznieks was a guest lecturer on “Topical Human Rights Issues in Latvia” at the World Latvian Youth Congress in Toronto, Canada.

5-7 July, Nils Muiznieks attended a Regional Seminar of Experts for Central and Eastern European States on ‘The Protection of Minorities and other Vulnerable Groups and Strengthening Human Rights Capacity at the National Level’ organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Warsaw, was elected chairman of the conference, and gave a presentation entitled “The Struggle Against Racism and Xenophobia in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends, Obstacles and Prospects.”

19 July, Nils Muiznieks attended a seminar on “Racism in Central/Eastern Europe and Beyond: Origins, Responses and Strategies” organised by the Open Society Institute sub-board on Law, Governance and Human Rights in Budapest and gave a presentation on “The Rise of Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe: Why Now?”

10-21 July, Ieva Leimane attended the Central European University summer course “Health Care Law from a Comparative and European Perspective” in Budapest.

7-10 September, Nils Muiznieks attended the inaugural symposium of the new Graduate Programme in Baltic and East European Studies at Stockholm University College and gave a lecture on “Human Rights in the Baltic States.”

9-16 September, Sandra Garsvane participated in the International Summer School on Human Rights organised in Warsaw, Poland by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

28-29 September, Ieva Leimane participated in the Baltic Mental Health Forum in Tallinn, Estonia.

4-6 October, Nils Muiznieks attended a meeting of Soros-related policy centres organised by the Local Government and Public Policy Institute in Warsaw, Poland.

8-13 October, Nils Muiznieks attended the European Conference Against Racism in Strasbourg and was rapporteur of the media working group at the NGO Forum.

11-13 October, Angelita Kamenska attended a seminar in Helsinki, Finland entitled “Outsider In One's Own Country: Perspectives on the Present Situation of the Russian-speaking Population in Latvia” organised by the Rozentals Society and the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki and gave a presentation on “Women and Social Integration.”

3-5 November, Nils Muiznieks attended the annual assembly of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights held in Prague, the Czech Republic.

20 December, Angelita Kamenska was appointed to a four-year term as Latvia's representative to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

Legal Assistance and Advocacy

Sandra Garsvane provided legal assistance to the public and received 117 complaints in 2000.

LCHRES staff continued to participate actively as representatives on the advisory council to the National Human Rights Office (NHRO).

LCHRES staff were active in advocating that new language regulations adhere to international human rights standards by working with the media, international organisations and others.

Nils Muiznieks participated in revising the Framework Document for the Integration of Society in Latvia and drafting the Integration Programme.

Income and Expenditure Statement for the LCHRES on the Year 2000

Income: Ls 55,742

Donors: Open Society Institute (Budapest), Council of Europe, Swedish Institute

Expenditures: Ls 46, 401

Expenditures towards aims foreseen in the statutes: Ls 13 410

Administrative and office expenses: Ls 32 991

 Salaries: Ls 23,100

 Social taxes: Ls 6,260

The accounts of the LCHRES for 2000 have been audited by SIA Audits BV and copies of the auditor's report are available at the LCHRES.