In this issue:

- The training courses on election monitoring for Jordanian human rights organizations were concluded.
- Workshop on drafting parallel reports
- Implementation of the Spanish Cooperation Agency- ACHRS Project: "Enhancing youth participation in the political system.
- ACHRS attends the General Assembly of the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Network.
- ACHRS hosts the sixth training course on trainers for human rights defenders funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Jordan.
- ACHRS participated in the 23rd General Assembly of CONGO from the 5th to the 7th of December in Geneva.
- ACHRS attends resumed 6th Session of Human Rights Council 2007

The ACHRS would like to extend its warmest thanks to the invaluable efforts and contributions made by the outgoing International Relations Unit staff: Luise, Aki and Beth and we would like to wish them all the best for their future endeavors.

The training courses on elections monitoring for Jordanian human rights organizations were concluded

The seventh, eight, ninth and tenth training courses on election monitoring for Jordanian human rights organizations were conducted by the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies and the Jordanian Coalition for Civil Society Organizations, in cooperation with Housha Cooperative Institute during the months of July, August and September, 2007. Several participants, from the different associations that are members of the Jordanian Coalition for Civil Society Organizations, attended the course.
**Workshop on drafting parallel reports**

In August 2007, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies organized a workshop for its staff in order to improve their skills in drafting reports on the application of the international human rights treaties which the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan acceded to, and to acquaint the participants with the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

**Implementation of the Spanish Cooperation Agency-ACHRS Project: "Enhancing youth participation in the political system"**

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, with the financial support of the Spanish Cooperation Agency, started implementing the project "Enhancing youth participation in the Jordanian political system" in October with their eyes on the Jordanian general elections on the 20th of November in order to increase youth involvement in the process.

**The aim of the project**

To improve and increase youth participation (15-22 years old) in the political life of Jordan at both levels: regional and national. To advance their abilities and skills in order to fully and adequately participate in the political system, especially taking into consideration their involvement as leaders and voters in the electoral system.

**The general characteristics of the project:**

- The project was carried out in 7 schools (Al-Itihad, Princess Taghreed, Makheer Amman, Jawa, Al-Durr Al-Manthour, Al-Gwesmah, Abu-Alanda and Al-Zhoor) and 7 universities (Philadelphia, Al-Hussein Bin Talal, King Abdullah II Fund at the technical University of Tafeela, Al Balqa’a, Jarash, Al-Isra’a, Al Yarmouk, Mou’ta, the University of Science and Technology and Al-Zarqa) covering the main Jordanian universities. The courses were attended by hundreds of students, both female and male and were carried out by Mr. Muhammad Sarsak.
- The plan was performed in order to improve the knowledge of the students about their political and electoral system.
- The project was executed through seminars, conferences and teaching sessions.
- The students completed assignments on these issues.
- The teaching courses were conducted by the following lawyers: Dr. Mustafa Yaghi, Zaha’a Al Majaly and Raed Al Athamna, members of the Training Unit of the Center.
ACHRS attends the General Assembly of the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Network
Madrid, 10 & 11, November 2007

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies participated in the General Assembly of the newly formed Euro-Med platform for Non-Governmental Network as a permanent member of this network. Miss Gloria Donate was the representative of the Center for the duration of the Assembly and was able to vote on the amendments, the budget, and annual plan of the network. In addition, the new board and president were also nominated.

After this GA, the ACHRS decided to start working on the creation of a national (Jordanian) platform of non governmental organizations in the following months.

ACHRS hosts the sixth training course on trainers for human rights defenders funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Jordan

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies thanks to the support of the Norwegian Embassy in Jordan organized and trained 18 human rights activists from all around the Arab world on the issue of women rights. The course lasted 20 days (the first stage taking place from 20-29 June and the second from the 25 October – 3 November).

Seminars, lectures, and workshops held by the ACHRS, July- December

1- In partnership with Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), Penal Reform International (PRI) organized a regional conference to challenge death penalty in the Arab World. The conference, which was held in Amman on 2-3 July 2007, was attended by participants representing civil society organizations from eight Arab countries: namely, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan.

2- On the 10th September 2007 the UK based Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) organized a Seminar entitled "Political Reform in Jordan: The Role of International Partners", in coordination with the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. The seminar was attended by 25 intellectuals, academics, party members, and journalists representing the various visions and political trends prevailing in the Jordanian society.

3- In November the ACHRS held a seminar on academic freedom in Jordanian universities. The seminar was attended by a group of academics, governmental and private universities professors, researchers, and those parties and civil society organizations interested in academic freedom and scientific research.

4- Also, in November 2007 the ACHRS held a discussion seminar, in cooperation with Penal Reform International (PRI), to discuss the plan of
5- From the 7-8 of November a regional seminar took place to evaluate the Juvenile Justice programs in MENA region, in cooperation with the Penal Reform International (PRI) and with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

6- From the 21-23 November 2007 the ACHRS held a Seminar on Political Reformation and the Role of NGOs in the Arab World, in cooperation with the Aspen Institute/ Berlin. The seminar aimed to strengthen and bring together NGOs and civil society organizations of the region, particularly those in Syria and Jordan, and facilitate the discussion of the many problems they encounter by an open forum for the sharing ideas and their experiences.

ACHRS participated in the 23rd General Assembly of CONGO from the 5th to the 7th of December in Geneva

The ACHRS has attended the 23rd General Assembly of CONGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC) in Geneva from the 5th to the 7th of December 2007. The Centre was represented by the International Relations staff, Miss Sadaf Hariri and Miss Gloria Doñate.

The ACHRS has recently joined CONGO (which commemorated its 60th anniversary this year) and therefore, it was the first time it attended its General Assembly. The General Assembly was attended by around 300 participants from over the world in order to review and vote the Annual Plan, the budget and the new president and board.

The overall theme for the debates during this assembly was focused around the concept of “Moving from Consultation to Partnership in Promoting Rights and Responsible Governance at all Levels”. In other words, how can civil society organisations move from having an advice-giving position in the international community to actually collaborating at an equal level with other international stakeholders such as governments or financial institutions in promoting and protecting international human rights standards.

The General Assembly reviewed and voted on the Treasurer report, the Auditor’s Report, the Amendments (which were suspended to the next General Assembly due to disagreements between the members) and the Report of the President. The new board and president were elected and the former president, Renate Bloem ended her seven year term surrounded by general ovation.

CONGO also organized many appealing workshops during these two days but the ACHRS chose to participate in the “Dynamic Partnership for Human Rights Education and Learning” since the Centre’s main activities are concentrated around the concept of human rights education. This workshop provided an opportunity for interactive discussion among the participants and the key note speakers (who included Therese Bjork from the Office of the High Commissioner, Felisa Tibbitts, from Human Rights Education Associates and Cynthia Gervais, from Rights and Democracy). The workshop assessed the challenges and shortcomings of the World Programme for Human Rights education.
Education (WPHRE) and its plan of action (the provision of human rights education in primary and secondary school system). The importance of increasing awareness of human rights among the youth was emphasised as the key factor in preventing conflicts, increasing tolerance and ending discrimination. This is a view strongly shared by the ACHRS, which actively engages in training courses geared towards the youth in Jordan by organizing workshops on human rights issues in Jordanian schools and universities.

The ACHRS wishes to thank the staff of CONGO for their serious and well organised General Assembly and for the fascinating parallel events they sponsored. Moreover, the ACHRS wants to express its most sincere gratitude to the CONGO staff, specially the Secretariat Phillipe Dam for easing dialogue between us and other members, proving that CONGO is indeed a true and real facilitator between the UN system and non governmental organisations.

ACHRS participates in the workshop on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council

The Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies is delighted to report that it had the pleasure to actively participate in the “Workshop and Public Event on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)” organised by Rights and Democracy (Geneva) from the 8th of December to the 11th.

The centre was represented by the International Relations Unit staff, more specifically by Sadaf Hariri and Gloria Doñate, who were kindly ask to participate by the Director of the Arab Bureau for Human Rights, Mr Elobaid Elamin and by the Director of Rights and Democracy in Geneva, Ms Cynthia Gervais. The ACHRS will like to thank both of them for their invitation and for the opportunity given to us to partake in this workshop.

The aim of this workshop was to bring together representatives from NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from various parts of the world in order to provide a space for the exchange of perspectives and experiences, as well as enhancing the overall understanding of the new UPR process.

In brief, the UPR is a new mechanism of the Human Rights Council under which it will review, on a regular basis, the fulfilment by all the 192 UN member states of their human rights obligations and responsibilities. According to UNGA resolution 60/251, the UPR is to be a cooperative mechanism, based on objective and reliable information, and equal treatment of all states. The UPR is a comprehensive and inclusive mechanism which allows submission from not only states but from other stakeholders: NHRIs, civil society organisations, non governmental organisations, media or academics.

As it is new international human rights instrument, there is still considerable uncertainty about how the UPR will work in practice or if it will actually become an effective tool in the promotion and protection of human rights. Therefore, in order to increase and improve our understanding on this instrument the workshop was arranged.

During the four days that the workshop lasted, there was a full assessment of the role of stakeholders (UN agencies, states, NGOs and NHRIs) in the UPR process. The challenges, opportunities, constraints that
this mechanism creates were discussed between the participants. Furthermore, since there were participants in the workshop who had already submitted their papers to the Office of the High Commissioner, they were able to provide a better insight into this process and offer their advice on what strategies NGOs should follow.

Since the UPR process is such a complicated mechanism which requires the cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders and since the ACHRS had the privilege to attend this workshop and consequently learn about the mandate of the UPR and understand the role of NGOs in this process, it feels it has the responsibility to inform civil society in Jordan and the Arab world in general about all these. Therefore, in the coming months it will aim to organise workshops and seminars to inform their partners.

ACHRS attends the resumed 6th Session of Human Rights Council, December 2007

The resumed 6th Session of the Human Rights Council took place between 10th and 14th December 2007 and was attended by representatives of the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies Sadaf Hariri and Gloria Donate. The first part of the resumed session was dedicated to the celebration of the upcoming 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with all Member States affirming their commitment to the principles therein enshrined and the need for continued state cooperation within the UN system to the achievement of peace, security, harmony; and the recognition of the inherent dignity and equality to which each human being is entitled, as envisaged by the Charter's framers.

Over the course of the five days many important and pressing human rights issues were discussed, including sessions reporting on the Mandate and Special Rapporteur missions to Burma, Darfur, Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, continued home to endemic and dire human rights violations, Special Rapporteurs on Counter terrorism measures (Sheinin), torture (Novak); the proposed resolution for the continued mandate on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (submitted by Brazil); and the discussion of the resolution for the adoption of the right to be free from discrimination and intolerance on the basis of religious disposition, following on the from the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

In addition, the Council looked more generally at the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR (see below for detailed findings) granting economic, social and cultural rights the status they deserve under the Vienna Declaration, and the new Universal Periodic Review organ of the Human Rights Council, which is intended to provide an overall framework for monitoring the human rights situation of all member States and their respective obligations to international treaties under the UN system, with a particularly crucial and integral role to played by national human rights institutions and civil society organizations in the reporting process stage.

There were also a great number of interesting and vital parallel side events organized by various NGOs who were present at the Council. The most notable of these were those on the subject of violations against children in Darfur, the UPR in the Arab Region, the suspension of rule of law and
introduction of martial law in the recent Pakistan crisis and legal rights in Iraq today. This illustrates the very real need for NGOs to keep in touch with the UN system and engage in the processes for active involvement that it amply provides, whether they be regional or international collaborations.

**Participatory Activities of the ACHRS**

1- A meeting of Experts' Committee to discuss the observatory and survey of Arab Institution for Democracy, Beirut, Lebanon from 1-4 October 2007.
2- Celebration of World Day against Death Penalty, organized by the International Coalition against Death Penalty, Casablanca, Morocco, 1-4 Oct., 2007
3- General Assembly of the Euro-med Non-governmental Platform, Madrid, Spain, 9-11 Nov. 2007.
4- The twentieth Conference of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA) was held in Ahmedabad, India, during the period 1-5 Dec. 2007.
5- The 23rd General Assembly of CONGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC) in Geneva from 5-7 Dec. 2007.
7- The Consultative Meeting on "Ways of Activating the Arab Charter for Human Rights", held in Cairo on 29/12/2007.

**Publications of the Center**

1- The eleventh issue of the election observer, July 2007.
2- The twelfth issue of the election observer, August 2007.
3- The thirteenth issue of the election observer, September 2007.
6- The second annual report on press freedom in the Arab countries for 2006.
7- The first report on academic freedom in Arab universities for May and July, 2007.
8- A report on media freedoms in the Arab countries for the first half of 2007.
10- The seventh issue (in English) of the center's newsletter in 2007.
11- A book entitled (The Right to a Fair Trial), by Judge Dr. Mohammad Al-Tarawneh.
12- The fourteenth issue of the election observer, October 2007.
13- The fifteenth issue of the election observer, November 2007.
14- A report entitled: “Comments on the elections of the 15th Jordanian House of Representatives.” The report consists of 18 pages and
discusses the electoral law and the election regulations enforced in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.

15- A study on Academic Freedom in the Jordanian Universities.
19- A book entitled "Studies on Death Penalty and the right to live in the Arab world" in cooperation with Penal Reform International (PRI) and supported by the European Commission. The book is a collective publication published Dec. 2007.
20- The sixteenth issue of the election observer, December 2007.

About ACHRS

Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) is an independent, regional, scientific, advocacy center for studies, research and training on issues of human rights and democracy.

In pursuit of contributing to the dissemination of a culture of human rights, our work and activities aim at strengthening civil society in Jordan and in the Arab World, and at inducing a change to the general level of awareness and sensibility towards human rights and democracy.

The projects carried out by ACHRS mainly concentrate on training for democracy and human rights as they are closely related and highly complementary. Conducting studies and research to serve as an informational basis is a further means to achieve our aims.

ACHRS:

- Consultative status with ECOSOC
- Constituting member of the Federation of Human Rights Centers in the Arab World
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
- Correspondent member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Member of the Arab Network for NGOs
- Member of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum
- Initiator for establishing the Election Network in the Arab Region (ENAR)
- Constituting member of the Jordanian Alliance for the CSO in Jordan
- Initiator for establishing the Arab Network for HR Trainers
- Initiator for establishing the Jordanian Network for HR Trainers
- Initiator for establishing the Iraqi Network for Supporting Women and Youth in Elections
- Member of the Arab Social Forum
- Member of CIVICUS
- Member of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)