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New partnership with European Human Rights Advocacy Center (EHRAC)

In February 2006, GYLA formalized a Partnership with the highly respected NGO, the European Human Rights Advocacy Center (EHRAC).

The European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) was established in January 2003 at London Metropolitan University in response to a request for support and expertise in litigating cases at the European Court of Human Rights from the Russian NGO, *Memorial*.

Today, EHRAC's primary objective is to assist individuals, lawyers and NGOs within the Russian Federation and Georgia to take cases to the European Court of Human Rights whilst working to transfer skills and build the capacity of the human rights community.

EHRAC has been working in partnership with *Memorial Human Rights Centre* (MHRC) to take cases to the European Court since 2003. The joint project has achieved considerable success. All of the eleven judgments handed down to date by the Court in relation to the project's cases have been positive, including the landmark judgments in the 'first six' cases arising from the Chechen conflict to be decided by the Court. A further thirteen cases have been declared admissible.

The cases concern such issues as extrajudicial execution, disappearance, torture, the destruction of property, environmental pollution, criminal justice and civil procedure.

Besides litigation work, EHRAC also implements projects on human rights training and raising awareness and dissemination of information. EHRAC has conducted several training seminars on the European Convention on Human Rights in Russia in conjunction with Memorial and runs an annual Legal Skills Development Programme in London and Strasbourg.

EHRAC publishes a biannual case bulletin, engages in presswork to raise awareness of European Court decisions and maintains English and Russian-language project websites (www.londonmet.ac.uk/ehrac and <http://ehracmos.memo.ru/>), which not only report on the project's progress and cases, but also constitute a training resource in that they contain many specialist articles on the European Court and human rights issues in the former Soviet Union.

Furthermore, EHRAC recently published a reference manual in Russian on taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights. The publication has already been disseminated widely (5,000 copies have been produced) across the Russian Federation and further afield to lawyers, NGOs, human rights ombudsmen, universities and libraries. For more information on EHRAC, www.londonmet.ac.uk/ehrac

A meeting between EHRAC and GYLA was held on February at EHRAC's London office to discuss the practicalities of a partnership. It was decided that the joint project will initially focus on three main areas: litigation at the European Court of Human Rights, for which EHRAC will support GYLA in taking cases from Georgia by providing expert advice and guidance; the organization of a training seminar in Tbilisi which is scheduled to take place in April 2006; and the participation of a GYLA delegate in EHRAC's Legal Skills Development Programme in London and Strasbourg.

The meeting was attended by Professor Bill Bowring, Tina Devadasan and Philip Leach of EHRAC and Zurab Burduli, Ana Dolidze and Sophio Japaridze of GYLA.