

## Promoting Religious Freedom During the Campaign Against Terrorism": Georges Fauriol Written Answers to Follow-up Questions

November 27, 2001 Q. Repressed political, democratic, and civil society development appears to go hand-in-hand with human rights abuses in many countries. How do you see the fulfillment of your mission as promoting religious freedom? What specific programs can you point to as models in that regard? A. IRI encourages effective institutional engagement which seeks to bring about changes in political culture. This implies much more than what can be described as nominal changes in civil society. For example, IRI is engaged in programs focused on youth, women, civic education - all of which collectively reinforce the notion of free interaction of competing ideas. Yet, at the same time these initiatives maintain basic consensus of societal values. The consensus helps promote freedom of religion which in turn provides the basis for freedom of assembly. This combines the individually-based nature of freedom of religion with the more community-defined freedom of assembly. In turn, such developments lead to the expansion of other freedoms, including the freedom of political organization and, specifically, political party building. IRI's philosophy is to be focused on developing or supporting this key instrument of the democratic process - political parties. They are the primary vehicles to internalize and defend basic freedoms, including religious freedom. Indeed, IRI experience shows that governance that protects religious freedom is ensured through the existence of vibrant and internally democratic political parties. Parties need to have an internally democratic structure to abide by and promote externally democratic rule. IRI encourages institutional engagement. This stems from the fundamental democratic principle that government should not, and does not have inherent preference in one faith over another. IRI follows the wisdom of our Founding Fathers whose early vision of the Republic was based on a series of specific values, but it fully allowed for the participation of people with differing values. IRI believes it is important to involve Islamist parties in a larger democratic debate. In Turkey for example, IRI has engaged and is actively working with the largest Islamist party and its constituencies together with working with other political parties. It has provided training, organization, political communication, party platform, leadership training, among other key activities. IRI's post-September 11 challenge is to engage an expanded community of parties in less-secular Islamic societies than Turkey. In Afghanistan, the challenge is the grassroots development of political parties. IRI's work in Cambodia is also a good model whereby our experience shows that a society faced with war, genocide, and communism can regenerate far quicker than many expected, and produce a vibrant civil society.