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*Walid Jumblatt... Ellen Johnson Sirleaf... Yulia Tymoshenko... three influential, international leaders interviewed on national American television this year, only through the work of the Bureau for International Reporting.*

### THE BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL REPORTING'S DECEMBER "POSTCARD"

Dear Friends and Supporters of the BIR,

We are pleased that this is already our fourth annual December newsletter. Despite the country's financial woes and profound changes in the world of journalism, the BIR is going strong into its fifth year of operations in 2012.

We are grateful to all of you for your financial and moral support, interest in our work and general kindness, which has made it possible for our non-profit to grow and prosper.

The BIR looks forward to continuing to serve Americans with the in-depth, policy-driven and high-level access international reporting they deserve.

We'd like to catch you up on our 2011 projects... and if you missed any of them, you can view them all on the BIR's website:

[www.thebir.org](http://www.thebir.org)

#### LEBANON:

The BIR started the new year in Lebanon, with [a fascinating story](#) that wove together a quest for international justice, hopes for democracy and the impact of sectarian politics. While we were there, Hezbollah toppled the Lebanese government and protestors took to the streets in response. The BIR's reporting gave American viewers an on-the-ground look at this influential and volatile Middle East country, at a time when the region as a whole was on the brink of profound change.

#### UKRAINE:

In the spring, [the BIR traveled to Ukraine](#), site of the famous 2004 Orange Revolution that swept out the remainders of Soviet influence and brought in a pro-western, democratically elected leadership. But the promises of the Orange Revolution were

not delivered and Ukraine now faces severe political backsliding reminiscent of authoritarian times. Lessons learned from Ukraine for the Arab Spring protestors: that building true democracy and functioning institutions is harder than it looks.

A second story from Ukraine highlighted [the worrisome rise of HIV in the country](#), now the largest epidemic in Europe, and growing. Our report looked at political crackdowns on practitioners of “substitution therapy” – the use of methadone and needle exchanges to stop the spread of the disease among the largest of infected populations – and raised ongoing concerns of treatment drug shortages due to systemic corruption.

#### LIBERIA:

In the fall, the BIR took on its most ambitious reporting cycle yet: three full-length, in-depth stories from one location, the country of Liberia on the eve of its important presidential elections.

[Our first Liberia report](#), on the record of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s first term and post-conflict fragilities following 14 years of civil war, took a comprehensive look at the concerns remaining in a country that has received more than a billion dollars of US foreign aid and has been home to one of the largest UN peacekeeping missions in the world. Our story aired just days before President Sirleaf won the Nobel Peace Prize and our interview provided the only fresh discussion with her to air on American television, despite the momentous occasion.

Our second Liberia story looked at the great [need for mental health care](#) in a country where 40% of citizens suffer from some form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder given the particular brutalities of Liberia’s civil war. These alarming figures represent a security risk as well, but our story brought hope to the topic in the work of members of the Liberian diaspora returning to their country to establish medical training programs and set government health policies.

Our third Liberia story explored [natural resources development](#) – in particular iron ore, rubber and the search for offshore oil – as both a possible financial blessing and potential curse for a country whose conflict was fueled by “blood resources”.

#### POST-BROADCAST OUTREACH:

After its broadcast airings, the BIR continued its educational and public outreach with a series of screenings here in the US. Georgetown University, American University, New York University and the Minnesota International Center were just some of our hosts this year for screenings and policy discussions on our countries and topics of focus.

The BIR was pleased to contribute for a second time to the Stanley Foundation’s “Event in a Box” series of DVD/discussion tool kits. This year’s theme, [Before the Killing Begins: the Politics of Mass Violence](#), examined ways in which to prevent genocide and mass atrocity. The BIR is particularly pleased that it has been able to reach new viewers through such partnerships and innovative use of its videos.

For all our 2011 work we are grateful for the ongoing support of the [Ford Foundation](#): with us from day one and providing the overarching “public media” support that has allowed us to operate as a full time organization. New funders the [Stanley Foundation](#) and [Humanity United](#) generously supported our Liberia work.

#### PLANS FOR 2012:

Year five of BIR operations promises to be another active and fascinating one.

We are pleased to announce the receipt of a major grant from the [Henry Luce Foundation](#), which will support the production of six reports over the next two years on the topic of Religion and International Affairs. First up will be a trip to Southeast Asia in early 2012 and we promise to span the globe as we look at little covered, religiously based conflicts and societal issues. Renewal of our [Compton Foundation](#)

support will also keep us on the “peace and security” beat, looking at post-conflict development and peace building in fragile countries. Other funding is currently being sought to support the continuation of the politically themed reporting at which the BIR has consistently excelled. Stay tuned for updates on our plans!

**INCREASED NEED FOR INDIVIDUAL DONORS:**

It is donations from individuals that give us the flexibility to respond to important, under-told stories that might not fit under a particular foundation’s topical interest, and allows us to preserve our editorial independence. Please consider donating if you find you have anything left to give at the end of this year.

For those of you who have supported the BIR in the past, we thank you for your early belief in us; a renewal of that support would now demonstrate to foundations that we have a core group of believers in our work – key to sustainability of any organization.

Visit our website for ways to contribute, including through a monthly installment plan. All donations are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

**[CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW](#)**

If you'd like to receive more updates about our work and track our progress in the field you can follow the BIR on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). And please help build our “fan base” by spreading the word to your friends and colleagues!

And on [our website](#) you can view our news feed, learn more about the organization's mandate, view all our videos and explore ways to support the BIR's work.

Sending warm wishes for the holidays and a healthy and prosperous 2012.

Kira Kay and Jason Maloney  
The Bureau for International Reporting

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