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PRESS RELEASE

Brazil: Arson Attack Destroys Radio's Broadcasting Studio

The studio of radio broadcaster Nova Coari, based in Coari, Amazonas state, was completely destroyed by an arson attack on 8 February 2010. The broadcaster had been a vocal critic of the city mayor, and the local press and blogosphere has suggested that the crime might have been politically motivated. The attack is an example of the very difficult situation faced by journalists working for small media outlets in the northern areas of Brazil, highlighted in ARTICLE 19's 2007 *Brazil Mission Statement on the State of Freedom of Expression*.

On the morning of 8 February, two gunmen subdued Nova Coari's employees and then set the station's only studio on fire. According to press reports, the station had been already the target of two attempted arson attacks. Antônio Maduro, the civil police commissioner in Coari, said he is investigating the attack, but that no suspects have so far been apprehended.

ARTICLE 19 condemns this attack, which unfortunately reaffirms the claim in its 2007 Statement that threats and attacks against the press and broadcasters are more common in northern and remote regions of Brazil. ARTICLE 19 calls on the authorities to undertake a proper investigation of this crime, in order to bring those responsible to justice.

In its 2007 statement, ARTICLE 19 affirmed that *"interviews with media workers pointed out that violence against journalists is still very present in Brazil, but its exact extent and characterization may be under-explored (...) [d]ifferent methodologies used to monitor cases of violations to freedom of press by different local actors make it difficult to fully assess the extent of the acts of violence, their number and type. People and associations seeking to monitor the situation pointed out that the small number of professionals involved, and the fact that many cases of violence occur in very distant regions, may result in under-estimating the full extent of the problem and abuses"*.

ARTICLE 19 once more encourages civil society organisations, journalists' unions, industry associations and others to review their respective coverage and approach on cases of violations to freedom of press in Brazil, in order to address possible gaps in their reporting activities.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Paula Martins, Brazil Coordinator, paula@article19.org, +55 11 3057 0042.
- The 2007 Brazil Mission Statement on the state of freedom of expression is available at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/brazil-mission-statement.pdf>
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.