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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Brazil: Proposed Electoral Law Restricts Internet Freedom**

**Proposed reform of the Brazilian electoral rules, part of broader reforms in this area being debated by the Senate, would subject internet media to the same rules as traditional broadcasters during electoral campaigns. ARTICLE 19 calls on Brazilian legislators to respect freedom of the internet by rejecting these proposals.**

The proposed amendment to Law 9.054/1997, which regulates electoral campaigns, were put forward by Senator Eduardo Azeredo. The proposals would prohibit internet providers and the websites of media outlets, during a three-month period prior to an election, from focusing on a specific candidate unless there is a “journalistic reason” for doing so. Instead, these outlets would have to guarantee the presence of at least two-thirds of the candidates in any video or audio coverage of the elections. Furthermore, only presidential candidates would be allowed to publish paid advertising on the Internet. Breach of these rules could lead to a fine of R\$5,000 to R\$30,000 (USD2,700 to 16,300).

Blogs, personal websites and social networks would not be subject to these rules and would be allowed to publish information about candidates, although not anonymously. National elections in Brazil will take place in October 2010. The new electoral law needs to be approved by 2 October 2009 to be applied during the next elections.

These rules unduly restrict freedom of expression on the internet, which should not be treated in a similar manner to a broadcaster due to very important differences between these two mediums. The Internet has played an important role in elections in many countries, as demonstrated effectively by the Obama presidential campaign.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Brazilian Congress to respect freedom of the internet, especially considering the importance of a public debate during electoral campaigns, by rejecting these proposed amendments to the electoral law.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For more information please contact: Mila Molina, [mila@article19.org](mailto:mila@article19.org), +55 11 3057 0042
- 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.