



PRESS RELEASE

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Uruguay: Senate must approve Community Broadcasting Bill

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Senate to confirm the adoption of the Community Broadcasting Bill, approved by the House of Representatives of Uruguay in June.

“The current absence of an appropriate legal framework for community broadcasters in Uruguay and elsewhere in the region constitutes a major injustice. As a result of this legal loophole, community broadcasters are routinely threatened, attacked and particularly vulnerable to abuses of power, while the communities they serve are deprived of essential information and means of communicate.” said Dr. Agnès Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.

On 5 June 2007, the House of Representatives of Uruguay approved by a large majority (49 votes in favour out of 59) a draft law that formally acknowledges and regulates the existence of the third broadcasting sector, *i.e.* the community radios and TV services run by not-for-profit civil society groups.

By approving the text of the Community Broadcasting Bill in its current version, the Senate will ensure that Uruguay complies with its international obligations and with the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (CIDH). The Senators will also place Uruguay in the regional lead for the protection of community broadcasting and will send the right signal to the other countries in the region.

“There is only one vote possible: YES. Such a law, when passed and implemented, will constitute a crucial precedent for Latin America, a model which must be emulated by the other countries in the region.” adds Dr. Callamard.

International standards on freedom of expression apply equally to the access and use of radio airwaves, including those used by community broadcasters. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a cornerstone of the international human rights law, acknowledges the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media. Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 13 of the American Convention of Human Rights also acknowledge the right of each individual to express themselves through any media.

The original proposal was tabled before the Parliament in 2005 by a group of legislators and a coalition formed by AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters), the National Association of Journalists (APU), the University of the Republic of Uruguay, the Institute of Socio-Legal Studies of Uruguay, the Solidarity and Development Institute, the Federation of Cooperatives of Social Housing (FUCVAM) and the national Federation of Workers' Unions (PIT-CNT). These coordinated efforts, which included drafting the original bill, highlight the successful role of a wide range of civil society groups towards strengthening human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of freedom of expression in Uruguay.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- For more information, please contact: Dario Ramirez, director, ARTICLE 19 Mexico, dario@article19.org, tel: +55 1054-6500.
- 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 freedom of expression.
- For further information, please refer to: ARTICLE 19 2002 Report "*Access to the Airwaves: Principles on Freedom of Expression and Broadcast Regulation*" <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/standards/accessairwaves.pdf>