



ARTICLE 19

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EXPRESSION

Newsletter

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THOUGHT SANITISATION: CENSORSHIP'S FINAL FRONTIER?

Dr. Agnès Callamard,
Executive Director

The first few months of 2006 have reminded us that few rights generate as much controversy or make for greater angst than does freedom of expression, and, conversely, that few abuses are as difficult to confront *universally* and defeat as the abuse that is censorship.

The cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohamed, the prosecution of David Irving, the

controversy surrounding the Abu Ghraib and Basra photos and the censorship of 50 Cent's movie poster: each does present very different legal, ethical and historical issues. No superficial amalgam should be attempted but common lessons drawn?: - quite possibly.

The primary lesson must be that freedom of expression is not an absolute right. At the heart of the debates and attendant violence of the last month are core questions: What are this right's boundaries? What should be the breaking point? Where is the threshold whose crossing means the space occupied is no longer that of individual freedoms but that of criminal behaviour? Is so-called blasphemy such a breaking point, as many have argued in the wake of the cartoons' publication? Or is the limit overreached when words or pictures glorify violent and reprehensible lifestyles, as the censors of 50 Cent's movie poster have argued? Or is the boundary crossed only once – as ARTICLE 19 advocates – words and pictures can be deemed to incite their beholder to hatred?

Secondly, we learn too that censorship inevitably is a servant of Power; albeit layered, multi-faceted Power whose faces and domains are complex and mercurial. Certainly the control over individuals' right to speak and over their access to information is exercised by states but also by other individuals, by corporations and by communities. It may be put into effect through legislation and by policing, but also by way of mob violence or

from within the newsroom or, more often than not, through a combination of all.

We fear for the well-being of these soldiers fighting abroad for a cause that, just some mere years later, even the most adamant pro-war supporters seem to have forgotten. The media then dares to include in its coverage of their brave endeavours, reports that these soldiers-occupiers are committing abuses. How can they betray the nation's gratitude in this way and in doing so, perhaps place soldiers' lives further at risk? Governments under the guise of their anger on behalf of "our boys" call for the removal from public scrutiny of yet another tranche of photographs capturing American soldiers' alleged ill-treatment of Iraqis in Abu Ghraib and British soldiers alleged excessive use of force in Basra.

Against the cartoons people demonstrated with increasing passion and it would be only a matter of days before the deaths began. And so they did. Some people were killed while protesting, others were merely bystanders, yet others were victim of consecutive sectarian violence. All of them were the victims of a wave of outrage that swept across the globe, borne of conviction and/or manipulation. Yet, there were many more, many other voices besides outrage that never made it onto the front page or the television screens. Freedom of expression and religion did not dominate but "the angry, the bare, the loudest, and the superficial", as one journalist reported, did.

A third lesson is clear: that censorship is a poor substitute indeed for sound and well thought out public policies when tackling prejudice and social inequality. Censorship when used by governments and non-state actors as a social tool to address perceived or real injustice, inequality, and fears, inevitably is a mechanism misused.

Maybe it is true that we feel some unease when coming across groups of young men gathering in the street or when they push past us, calling out in loud voices, dominating public spaces, behaving aggressively and, perhaps, even carrying weapons. But does it make policy sense to censor movies or posters or advertisements that we fear are the icons of this culture? Hiding a community's

symbols does not make the community disappear... to the contrary. What ultimately can be achieved by marginalising or sanitising young peoples' opinions and voices or those with whom young people identify?

Is the media responsible for ill-fated foreign or domestic policies? Should it consider these before reporting on matters of clear public interest? Of course not! The behaviour of American soldiers at Abu Ghraib indicates that violations of the fundamental rules of war: the Geneva Conventions were committed. By reporting these breaches, systematically, the media performs its duty. Universal human rights values demands that we celebrate a diligent media that brings to public attention issues of significant even if unpopular public interest.

Fourth, it is possible to see that in 2006, censorship is becoming the habit of sanitising thoughts and behaviours; the imposition of certain values and conduct. It seeks to advance a world view more often than not devoid of complexity or intricacy: a view stripped down to its bare minimum – to a set of attributes required for the reproduction of a dominant or domineering ideology. In the place of leadership, we find thought control and thought sanitisation.

**ALERT: Press freedom under threat
in the wake of the Danish cartoon
controversy**

ARTICLE 19 is deeply concerned by the repressive measures taken against various newspapers, and their Editors, in the Middle East and internationally in response to their decisions to reproduce cartoons satirising the Prophet Mohammed.

In **Yemen** the licenses of three independent newspapers, the English-language weekly *Yemen Observer*; the independent weekly tabloid *Rai al-A'am* and the privately owned weekly tabloid *Al-Hurriya*, were cancelled and their Editors imprisoned, in a move against the newspapers' decisions to reproduce the controversial Danish cartoons. The

three Editors are currently awaiting trial. The closure of these three newspapers is particularly troubling given the run-up to Yemen's 2006 elections. In **Jordan**, Mr. Jihad Al-Momani and Mr. Hisham al Khalidi, Editors respectively of *Shihan* and of *al-Mihwar* were arrested for publishing the cartoons. Subsequently they were freed on bail but are awaiting trial. *Shams* newspaper in **Saudi Arabia** was also suspended from publishing after printing some of the cartoons. In **Malaysia**, the authorities have ordered the suspension of *Sarawak Tribune*, a regional daily, which had reprinted the cartoons. The authorities declared it an offence for anyone to publish, produce, import, circulate or possess the caricatures. In **Algeria**, authorities closed the *Panorama* and *Essafir*, two weekly newspapers, and arrested their editors also for printing the cartoons.

ARTICLE 19 has called for a suspension of all legal proceedings against newspapers penalised for exercising their legitimate right to freedom of expression. We reiterate our request for governments to take all possible measures to ensure that the independent press is able to perform their functions as guaranteed under international law.

Southeast Asia: Increasing abuse of defamation law

ARTICLE 19 has monitored with great concern, a rise in the use and abuse of defamation law in Southeast Asia. There have been several high-profile defamation cases in Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia over the last six months, demonstrating the pressing need for reform of defamation law and protection of civil society and the Media from the abuse of defamation law.

In **Cambodia**, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the detention of and filed defamation charges against Mam Sonando, a prominent broadcaster, and a number of leading human rights activists, including Yeng Virak, the executive director of our partner organisation, the *Cambodian Legal Education Community*. The detentions and charges filed by the prime minister in October stemmed from Mr So-

nando's radio programme in which a guest speaker criticised PM Hun Sen's decision regarding a border issue with Vietnam. The other detentions and charges were based on a banner displayed at a Human Rights Day celebration that had been organised by a number of civil society groups. Following condemnations and protests from ARTICLE 19 and various other actors, the detainees were released, and eventually the charges were also dropped. However, these arrests have contributed to an atmosphere in which fear, pressure and censorship prevail, further curtailing freedom of expression. This is all the more concerning given that Cambodia is seeking to adopt a new penal code which would criminalise defamation, thus creating further obstacles to freedom of expression in Cambodia. ARTICLE 19 has campaigned against the current draft of the new law, while continuing to support the Cambodian campaign for access to information.

In **Thailand**, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra filed six criminal and civil defamation lawsuits against Sondhi Limthongkul, a broadcaster and staunch critic of the PM, and his colleague, Sarocha Pornudomsak. These lawsuits were based on Sondhi's statement that the prime minister had abused power and was disloyal to the King. Fortunately the lawsuits were dropped following King Bhumibol Adulyadej's intervention, otherwise, Sondhi and Sarocha could have been imprisoned for up to ten years and forced to pay fines and damages as high as USD 50 million.

In **Indonesia**, the saga of defamation cases involving businessman Tomy Winata and the Tempo press group continues. In January 2006, the Jakarta High Court upheld the lower court's decision that Goenawan Mohammad — a prominent journalist, founder of *Tempo* and member of ARTICLE 19's international board — pay non-material damages of over USD 100,000, publicise apologies in two national dailies and pay a fine of over USD 1,000 for each day of delay in publishing the apology. Goenawan and *Tempo Daily* will appeal the verdict to the Supreme Court. In its statement, ARTICLE 19 called

on the Indonesian government and judiciary to overturn the judgment against Goenawan and *Tempo Daily*, and to reform the defamation law to bring it into line with international and constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. In February, the Indonesian Supreme Court overturned the criminal libel conviction of Bambang Harymurti, the chief editor of *Tempo* magazine. ARTICLE 19 continues to campaign for a similar outcome for the other outstanding cases against *Tempo* and its journalists and publishers. *For further information, please contact Dini Widiastuti at dini@article19.org*

ARTICLE 19 Country Snapshots

ASEAN: In December 2005, ARTICLE 19 published seven baseline studies on Freedom of Expression and the Media. The studies, which were written in cooperation with local partners, cover **Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste**. The publications provide comprehensive information about the laws and practices of freedom of expression, examples of prominent cases of restrictions, and analysis of the impact of these restrictions on the population.

Eritrea: In December 2005, the African commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a Resolution against the continued violations of human rights and freedom of expression in Eritrea, and confirmed the admissibility of the case submitted by ARTICLE 19 on behalf of the Eritrean journalists and politicians in prison since 2001. The Resolution denounces among others, the arbitrary detention without trial of journalists and political leaders and calls for their immediate release. ARTICLE 19 considers this Resolution as a milestone in the fight for justice and human rights in Eritrea and will continue to pursue the case on behalf of the detainees. The African Union must now take decisive action against the Eritrea government. *For more information:*

http://www.achpr.org/english/info/news_en.html

Peru: ARTICLE 19 and its partners IPYS and Flora Tristan have so far trained 81 civil society representatives to use access to information law as part of their advocacy work on sexual and reproductive health issues. Information requests have been made by participants using their new knowledge of the right to access information. We are now holding follow-up sessions in which their experiences are being evaluated. We have held concurrent workshops with local Ministry of Health bodies, and thus far have trained 32 public officials on their responsibilities in implementing the access to information law.

Russia: Between 6 and 10 February 2006 in Moscow, ARTICLE 19 and the Mass Media Defence Center (MMDC) held an intensive course for lawyers from different regions on Russian media law and international standards on freedom of expression. Trainers included prominent Russian human rights lawyers who have successfully taken cases to the European Court of Human Rights. Over the last year or so, ARTICLE 19 has monitored a sharp increase in the abuses of freedom of expression in Russia, reflected in particular in the numerous legal suits brought against the media. ARTICLE 19 aims to enhance the lawyers' ability to defend journalists in court as well as to create a support network and a forum for discussion and sharing experiences.

Macedonia: On January 25th, five years of joint campaigning by ARTICLE 19 and our partners in Macedonia bore fruit when the parliament adopted a progressive freedom of information act. The final version included several crucial last-minute improvements suggested by ARTICLE 19, such as protection for whistleblowers and the establishment of a dedicated freedom of information commission.

Palestine: In December 2005, ARTICLE 19 and UNESCO undertook a mission to Palestine to work with a local team of legal experts on the drafting of new media legislation for the Palestinian National Authority. The

President and then Minister of Information had both given firm commitments to drafting four new and progressive laws in the areas of broadcast regulation, press, the public broadcasting and the national news agency. It would seem that, at the time, the Palestinian authorities were genuine in their commitment to progressive legal reform, calling for a truly independent public broadcaster and broadcast regulator, as well as a major overhaul of the currently quite repressive press law. *Hamas'* election in January 2006 means that we will have to wait to see if this commitment to reform remains as firm but we certainly hope it does. If so, this could represent one of the most promising developments in the Middle East in terms of progressive media legislation.

West Africa: In December 2005, ARTICLE 19 and Panos Institute for West Africa organised a workshop on the public interest mission of private and community broadcasters in West Africa. The workshop was attended by the Minister of Information of Senegal, broadcast regulators, directors and senior editors of private and community radios operating in 13 countries in West Africa. One of the major outcomes of the workshop was the decision by broadcasters to develop a sub-regional Charter, which will serve as a blue print for public interest broadcasting in West Africa. To that effect, ARTICLE 19 and Panos have agreed to provide support for the drafting of the Charter.

AFRICA: Broadcasting diversity and pluralism curriculum for African media regulators

The creation of legal, institutional and cultural frameworks for pluralistic and diverse broadcasting in Africa has proven to be one of the most difficult spheres of media reform. Many governments are particularly resistant to loosening their control over the public service broadcast media and creating access to broadcasting for pluralistic debate.

Thanks to the support of the Swedish Development Agency, in 2004 ARTICLE 19 called together an advisory group, consisting of academics from various African countries and the UK who work on broadcasting policy issues, to discuss the development of a curriculum to heighten African regulatory bodies' awareness of policy and regulation needed to promote diverse and pluralistic broadcasting landscape. As of yet, no institution in Africa offers thorough training on issues relating to broadcasting regulation, diversity and pluralism. The advisory group elaborated the outline for a curriculum that would address issues such as the general principles of broadcasting regulation, structure of regulatory bodies, licensing, regulation of content (local content, hate speech) and complaints/sanctions mechanisms. The "Broadcasting Diversity and Pluralism" curriculum was drafted by ARTICLE 19 in 2005 in collaboration with the advisory group.

From January 23rd to 27th 2006, ARTICLE 19 held a pilot course in Kampala, Uganda, to assess its newly drafted curriculum. Participants included staff of media regulatory authorities from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Malawi and Mozambique. The course was co-facilitated by Professor Tawana Kupe from Wits University in South Africa and Adolf Mbaine from Makerere University in Uganda.

The curriculum is being revised on the basis of the participants' comments and suggestions, and should be launched in March 2006. ARTICLE 19 will work then with academic institutions in Africa to incorporate this curriculum into their established programmes and to make it available on the Web. The curriculum will also receive the endorsement of the African Communications Regulator's Authority Network (ACRAN) and should be made available in French and Portuguese in the near future. *For further information, please contact John Barker, at johnb@article19.org*

Special mandates adopt 2005 Joint Declaration

The three special mandates for protecting freedom of expression – the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression – have, with the assistance of ARTICLE 19, adopted a Joint Declaration every year since 1999. Each Declaration focuses on different thematic issues, such as defamation, broadcast regulation, attacks on journalists, access to publicly-held information, and secrecy laws. The 2005 Joint Declaration, adopted on 21 December 2005, focuses on two issues: freedom of expression and the Internet, and anti-terrorism legislation.

The 2005 Joint Declaration echoes the frustration of many human rights campaigners who believe that to respond to terror attacks by restricting fundamental human rights is to play into the hands of the terrorists, who seek to undermine democracy and respect for human rights. The Declaration warns against the use of unduly vague terms in anti-terrorist legislation, such as ‘glorifying’ or ‘promoting’ terrorism. Specifically, it calls on States to ensure that any new restrictions on freedom of expression are limited to cases of direct incitement to terrorism, defined as, “a direct call to engage in terrorism, with the intention that this should promote terrorism, and in a context in which the call is directly causally responsible for increasing the actual likelihood of a terrorist act occurring.”

The primary focus of the 2005 Joint Declaration is on Internet regulation and governance. In the area of content regulation, it calls on States not to impose filtering systems which are not end-user controlled or to impose official requirements on websites, blogs and so on to register. On the issue of Internet content, the Joint Declaration warns against liability for ISPs and other carriers for statements they host, unless they have adopted those statements as their own or they have

refused to obey a court order to remove the statements. The Declaration reiterates a long-standing ARTICLE 19 recommendation that jurisdiction in Internet cases should be restricted to the State of establishment of the author of the impugned statements or States to which those statements are specifically directed.

The Joint Declaration also touches on Internet governance, a topical issue given that the Internet Governance Forum was recently initiated in Geneva. It builds on the accepted principle that broadcast regulatory bodies should be independent of government, political or commercial control, calling for the same standards to be applied to Internet oversight bodies. While this has a clear basis in principle, it is also a challenge to the present governance arrangements, overseen by ICANN, which operates under an MOU with the US Department of Commerce.

Perhaps the most controversial recommendation in the Joint Declaration is its call for corporations which provide Internet searching and other services to work together to resist official attempts to control or restrict use of the Internet. This is particularly important given recent criticisms of Yahoo, Google, Microsoft and Cisco relating to their operations in China, including before a US Congressional hearing on 15 February 2006. The Declaration has already been quoted in the context of this ongoing debate and may yet prove an important rallying call for action. *For further information, contact Toby Mendel, at toby@article19.org*

ARTICLE 19 in Iraq: Promoting freedom of expression

In the latter half of 2005, in collaboration with UNESCO, ARTICLE 19 carried out a diverse programme of work in Iraq. We were involved in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, ran workshops with legislators and a wide range of other stakeholders to discuss freedom of expression and a new media policy, and we participated in training for the

board of Iraq's fledgling national public service broadcaster. We also ran a two-week pilot training-of-trainers seminar, to provide Iraqi NGOs and media representatives with tools to raise awareness of freedom of expression standards amongst their peers in Iraq.

Throughout July, August and September, ARTICLE 19 legal team ran workshops with Iraqi legislators, NGOs and media representatives to develop constitutional clauses that would provide the strongest possible protection for freedom of expression. The Constitution was finally adopted on October 15 and while the end-result was not all we had asked for, a number of our recommendations were adopted nonetheless. Currently ARTICLE 19 is working with the Iraqi ministry of human rights on the revision of the Constitution, as well as on the bringing of Iraq's general legal regime for freedom of expression into line with international standards.

From September to December 2005 ARTICLE 19's Middle East programme developed and tested a training-of-trainers course for 15 Iraqi participants, representing the media and human and women's rights communities and diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. The ten day course conducted in Cairo, Egypt, covered a number of substantive themes, including the international framework for human rights and freedom of expression, media ethics, women's rights and the role of the media in addressing gender inequalities and the rights and responsibilities of the media during elections and in reporting human rights violations.

Participants benefited from a number of visits to Egyptian human rights and media organisations, to maximise knowledge-sharing and build networks between Iraqi and Egyptian civil society. Substantive sessions at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate and the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights took place. In addition, a private session with Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations and current Head of the National Council for Human Rights, allowed

participants to discuss pertinent human rights questions relating to the war in Iraq.

Future ARTICLE 19's activities in Iraq, being planned in collaboration with UNESCO, will focus on continuing to build the capacity of a diverse and non-sectarian Iraqi civil society and media community to ensure their substantive and non-sectarian input in legal and policy developments on freedom of expression. *For further information, please contact Laura Salama at: laura@article19.org*

Broadening the constituency for freedom of information in Mexico

ARTICLE 19 has launched two Freedom of Information projects in Mexico with the aim of broadening the constituency supporting and using the existing Access to Information Legislation in the country.

One project is considering access to information and health from the point of view of young people: what are their information needs and what challenges do they face in accessing information about sexual and reproductive health. ARTICLE 19 is also asking the Mexican government to generate, systematise and release good quality information in the field of reproductive and sexual health policy making, implementation and public spending.

The other project is focusing on the use and knowledge of access to information legislation by the private sector. The objective of the project is to support private bodies to use access to information legislation and by so doing combat corruption and build more transparent and accountable practices, their own and state practices. With these projects, ARTICLE 19 intensifies its presence in the country and the region and by opening an office located in Mexico City will establish even closer links with the Freedom of Information movement in the country and beyond. *For further information, please contact Rafael Barca: rafael@article19.org*

Russia and Intolerance Report Launch

On 12 December 2005, ARTICLE 19 launched its report *Art, Religion and Hatred: Religious Intolerance in Russia and its Effect on Art*. The report analyses restrictions of the right to free expression in Russia and describes the repression of independent voices, particularly in the arts scene. It also details how such actions breach Russia's international obligations. The report was translated into Russian and disseminated widely within Russia by our partner, Voronezh-based Mass Media Defence Centre. The report was launched at the Frontline Club (London), with the participation of *Oleg Yanushevski* - one of the artists whose case is featured in the report -, and *Bill Bowring*, Professor of Human Rights and International Law at London Metropolitan University.

Religious intolerance and extreme nationalism in Russia has led to two problematic developments. First, the Russian authorities have abused, and selectively implemented, legal provisions on incitement to religious hatred. Secondly, extremist groups have reacted with violence to ideas expressed by those espousing non-Orthodox views, whilst the authorities have failed to effectively protect victims of such violence. In this climate, the work for the promotion of human rights undertaken by brave local activists and international organisations is more important than ever. *For further information, please contact Federica Prina at federica@article19.org.*

ARTICLE 19 Publications September 2005 – January 2006

- **Argentina:** Memorandum on Two Drafts of the Law on Access to Public Information of Argentina, September 05
- **Armenia:** Statement on Constitutional Reform in Armenia: Focus on Freedom of Expression, September 05; Note on Proposed Amendments to Armenia's

Television and Radio Law to Strengthen the Independence of Regulatory Bodies in the Broadcast Sector, November 05; Note on Proposed Amendments to Armenia's Law on Mass Communication, November 2005; Criminal liability for insulting a public official: Abolition of Article 318 of the Armenian Criminal Code, December 2005

- **Brazil:** Memorandum on a proposed draft Bill on Freedom of Information for Brazil, Nov. 05
- **Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand:** Baselines studies on freedom of expression and the Media, Dec.05
- **Defamation:** Putting expression behind bars: criminal defamation and freedom of expression (November 2005)
- Memorandum on **European Investment Bank's** Public Disclosure Policy (Draft II), November 05
- **Google's** Diluted Message: Statement on censorship on Google.cn, February 2006
- **ICT:** Experiencing Technical Difficulties: The Urgent Need to Rewire and Reboot the ICT-Development Machine, Oct 2005
- **Jordan:** Memorandum on Jordan's Protection of State Secrets & Documents Provisional Law No. (50), December 2005; Memorandum on Jordanian draft Law on Guarantee of Access to Information, December 2005
- Note on **Kazakhstan's** Regulations for the Allocation of Domain Space, October 05
- Memorandum on **Kenya's** Freedom of Information Bill, January 2006
- **Kyrgyzstan:** Memorandum on the Kyrgyz Mass Media Law and the Law on Journalists Activities, September 2005; Memorandum on Laws of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan relating to the Protection of Reputation, September 2005
- Note on Problems with the **International Finance Corporation** Proposed Exceptions Regime, October 05
- **Liberia:** Comments on the Liberian draft Law and Policy Providing for the Establishment of the National Public Broadcasting Service, October 05

- Memorandum on the draft **Palestinian** Law on National Council for Audiovisual, December 2005
- **Nepal:** Memorandum on the Ordinance ‘Amending Some of the Nepal Act Relating to the Media’, 2062, October 05
- **Peru:** Guia para usar la ley de acceso a la información (user-friendly guide for members of the public and health rights activists making information requests). With IPYS and Flora Tristan, December 2005
- **Russia:** Art, Religion and Hatred. The Religious Intolerance in Russia and its Effect on Art, December 05
- **Sierra Leone:** Statement of support for draft access to Information Bill for Sierra Leone, December 2005
- **South-East Europe:** ARTICLE 19: Concerns over the Retention of Criminal Defamation in South-East Europe, November 2005
- **Ukraine:** State to Public: Genuine Public Service Broadcasting in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine? December 2005
- **United Kingdom:** Memorandum on Home Office List of ‘Unacceptable Behaviours’, October 2005; Statement on clause 1 of the UK Terrorism Bill, October 2005; Statement on the ‘Encouragement’ of Terrorism: Clause 1 of the UK Terrorism Bill, December 2005

Coming Up...

Abkhazia: In early 2006, ARTICLE 19 will start a new project: “Building Capacity for Good Municipal Governance in Abkhazia – with a focus on freedom of information and women’s issues in Sukhum, Gudauta and Tkuarchal districts.” The project will initiate activities with grass-roots organisations in the non-recognised Abkhazian State to enhance women’s right to information.

Afghanistan: ARTICLE 19 will assist the newly appointed Afghan Ad Hoc Independent High Commission of Communication and Information to strengthen its capacity to promote a more independent broadcast regula-

tory environment, as part of a UNESCO training initiative in Paris.

Nepal: In the 12 months since he seized power, King Gyanendra has persistently repressed human rights, freedom of expression and press freedom by disregarding Nepal’s Constitution and its international obligations. ARTICLE 19 has been providing support to Nepalese civil society and media as part of an International Mission consisting of a dozen international NGOs and UNESCO. The International Mission is planning a second joint mission to Nepal between 20-28 March, 2006.

Russia: In May 2006, ARTICLE 19 representatives will carry out missions to selected Russian regions to meet local organisations and discuss the problems of the media outside the main cities. The meetings will lead to cooperation with local NGOs and the development of a strategy to enhance freedom of expression in regions where journalists are most vulnerable.

South Sudan and Liberia: In March, ARTICLE 19 will facilitate workshops with media and civil society organisations in Southern Sudan and Liberia. The aim is to assist local partners to finalise and validate the draft media policies for the two countries.

West Africa: ARTICLE 19 will hold national workshops in Senegal and Sierra Leone on how to use the African regional human rights mechanisms to promote on freedom of expression. The workshops are intended for legal practitioners and human rights advocates and will help assess the state of freedom of expression in the two countries.

Ukraine: On 25 April 2006, a large press conference will be held in Kyiv, Ukraine, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. The press conference will stress how access to environmental information is essential for the well-being of society. It will also mark the beginning of a new ARTICLE 19 project, “Building Local Capacity to Promote Freedom of Information on Environmental Matters in Ukraine”.

