



For Immediate Release – 27 June 2008

## **BELARUS: International Organisations Call for Immediate Withdrawal of the Belarusian Draft Law on Mass Media**

**International human rights and freedom of expression organisations have joined their voices in protest against the Belarusian Draft Law on Mass Media which imposes further restrictions on an already severe regulatory regime for Belarusian mass media.**

On 24 June 2008 the draft law was adopted by the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, and is currently before the upper chamber, the Council of the Republic. If approved, the Bill will pass to President Lukashenka for approval. Letters addressed to the Members of the Council of Republic and to President Lukashenka urge them to reject the draft and calls on the Belarusian authorities to revise the Law on Mass Media in order to bring it into line with international human rights standards.

The letters also remind Belarusian authorities about the country's international commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which it is a signatory, and its obligations with respect to the right to freedom of expression.

The letters are signed by ARTICLE 19, Human Rights House Foundation, Index on Censorship, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Norwegian Union of Journalists, Norwegian Pen Centre, Civic Belarus, and The Danish Union of Journalists

- The letters are available in English and Belarusian at:
  - <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/belarus-restrictive-mass-media-law-council-.pdf>
  - <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/belarus-restrictive-proposed-law-on-media.pdf>
  - <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/belarus-restrictive-media-law-council-.pdf>
  - <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/belarus-restrictive-media-law.pdf>
- For more information, please contact Anoush Begoyan, Europe Programme Officer, [anoushb@article19.org](mailto:anoushb@article19.org) +44 20 7278 9292.
- 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.