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PRESS RELEASE

**Iran: ARTICLE 19 Urges Human Rights Council to Address
Free Expression**

ARTICLE 19 has provided a Submission to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) raising serious concerns about the failure of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect and promote freedom of expression in that country. This Submission, which comes as the HRC prepares its Universal Periodic Review of Iran, focuses on the Iranian Government's failure to fulfill its international obligations to protect the right to freedom of expression.

In particular, ARTICLE 19 examines a number of restrictions on freedom of expression contained in the Iranian Constitution, as well as the highly restrictive regulation of print media that represents a serious incursion on the structural freedom of the press and its independence from political influence.

ARTICLE 19 is particularly concerned about the extensive content restrictions on print media. This includes a lack of objective criteria and clear definitions in the Press Law, which also sets out licensing obligations for all individuals and organisations operating in the press sector, and excessively harsh penalties, including incarceration, flogging and suspension/banning of media outlets, for violations of the Press Law. It also notes that there are a number of problematic administrative and judicial practices which further heighten the repressive impact of the legislative provisions, including the inappropriate use of the Revolutionary Court and the issuing of written orders by the Executive concerning what material can be discussed in the print media.

Furthermore, the submission criticises the Government's control over television and radio broadcasting, and a lack of independent public services broadcasting. ARTICLE 19 also raises serious concerns about the numerous cases of arbitrary arrest and harassment of journalists, bloggers and writers, and outlines instances of internet censorship in Iran.

ARTICLE 19 deplores the severe violations of press freedom and freedom of expression in Iran and urges the HRC to address them during the review.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- For the full text of the submission, see <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/submissions/iran-article-19-submission-to-the-un-universal-periodic-review.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.