



## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – 13 May 2008

### Lebanon: Armed Groups Attack Free Expression

**ARTICLE 19 condemns in the strongest of terms the closure of six media outlets in Lebanon and the attack on two others this weekend at the hands of armed men affiliated with Hezbollah and the opposition in Lebanon.**

On Friday 9 May, Hezbollah fighters and its allies forced Future TV, Future News and Radio Orient off the air. Gunmen forced themselves into the headquarters of each of these media outlets and threatened workers. Cables were disconnected and employees were forced out of the facilities. On that same day, the old headquarters of Future TV which houses the TV station's archives was mercilessly burnt. Fire fighters were not allowed to put the flames off and flags of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party were hoisted atop the burnt structures. The offices of the daily *Al-Mustakbal* faced a similar fate.

*Al-Liwaa* daily and *Al-Shira'* magazine were also forced to stop their work.

On Saturday 10 May, the headquarters of the Armenian-speaking *Radio Sevan* was also burnt in West Beirut. Meanwhile, protestors demonstrating in support of free expression were harassed by gunmen in Beirut. The protest was organised by the Lebanese Press Club.

On Monday 12 May two cameramen working for *Al-Jazeera* were slightly injured by bullets fired on their vehicle by gunmen.

*"The violent closure of the 6 media outlets and attacks on media workers at the hands of gunmen is a very dangerous development and blow to freedom of expression in Lebanon, which is known for its media pluralism."* said Dr. Callamard, executive director of ARTICLE 19.

*ARTICLE 19 condemns in the strongest terms the attacks against media outlets and media workers by Hezbollah and the opposition in Lebanon. These attacks violate the right of all Lebanese people to receive and impart information and ideas, particularly crucial in such stressful situations.*

*We call upon the Lebanese government and the army to take all necessary measures to protect media outlets and media workers and journalists from attacks, threats and harassment.*

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- For more information, please contact Hoda Rouhana, Middle East Programme Officer, [hoda@article19.org](mailto:hoda@article19.org), +44-207278-9292

- 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.