

XIX

ARTICLE 19

For immediate release – 15 May 2009

Special Mandates Highlight Framework for Media and Elections

The four special mandates on freedom of expression – the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the ACHPR (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information – today issued a Joint Statement on Media and Elections, with the assistance of ARTICLE 19.

The Joint Statement notes the importance of robust and open debate, as well as access to information, during elections, and the key role of the media in framing electoral issues and informing the electorate. Only a diverse and independent media, including independent public service broadcasting, can fulfil this role. Among other things, the Statement calls for:

- Measures to create an environment in which a pluralistic media sector can flourish.
- The repeal of laws that unduly restrict freedom of expression and protection against liability for disseminating statements made directly by political parties or candidates.
- Effective systems to prevent threats and attacks against the media.
- Rules against discrimination in the allocation of political advertisements.
- Any regulatory powers to be exercised only by independent bodies.
- Clear obligations on public broadcasters, including to inform the electorate, to respect strictly rules on impartiality and balance, and to grant equitable access to all parties and candidates.

ARTICLE 19 first brought the special mandates on freedom of expression together in 1999 and they have issued a Joint Declaration every year since then, along with a number of other statements. Each serves to elaborate on the meaning of freedom of expression in a different thematic area(s). Collectively, they provide important guidance to those wishing to understand international human rights standards.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The Joint Statement is available in English at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/joint-statement-on-the-media-and-elections.pdf> and in Spanish at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/declaracion-conjunta-sobre-medios-de-comunicacion-y-elecciones.pdf>
- For more information: please contact Toby Mendel, a19law@hfx.eastlink.ca, +1 902 431-4688.
- 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.