



ARTICLE 19

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release –30 November 2007

**Sudan: Media Assessment Launched following a meeting of
the National Roundtable**

A number of Sudanese stakeholders met in Nairobi, Kenya on November 25 and 26 as part of a series of National Roundtables to discuss Sudan's draft national media laws. The two day meeting was followed by the launch of a Media Assessment; *Media in Sudan at a crossroads: Assessment and outline of a strategy for media support*. The meeting was held as a part of an ARTICLE 19 managed project '*Promoting freedom of expression and civil society involvement towards democratic media legislation in Sudan*'.

The roundtable discussed the four draft laws produced by the think tank Future Trends Foundation, and ARTICLE 19's comment on these drafts, published in July 2008. Members of the roundtable mirrored concerns raised by the project's Media Law Task Force which met earlier this year, and that are iterated in the A19 memorandum. Of particular concern voiced at the meeting, was regarding the effect the vague clauses in the bills would have on freedom of expression, and the impact some of the restrictive clauses in the laws would have on the media.

Dr. Agnes Callamard said '*this is a positive step forward in engaging Sudanese civil society to advocate for an environment more conducive to freedom of expression. Since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 we have seen a disappointing level of improvement in media capacity and freedoms*'. Dr Callamard continued '*Whilst we welcome the drafting of the laws, they need significant revision before they adhere to international standards for free media and expression.*'

The constant harassment and censorship targeting the media and civil society in Sudan led organizers to choose Nairobi as a location where participants were offered a rare chance to speak freely about Sudan's media legislation and the current issues facing the press. These issues, amongst others, are flagged up in the Media Assessment, whose production was led by consortium member International Media Support (IMS), with contributions from all consortium partners; ARTICLE 19, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC), Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development (KCHRED), International media Support (IMS) and Association for Media Development in Southern Sudan (AMDISS).

This report is an update of a 2003 assessment, and describes the array of challenges facing the media and freedom and the changes to the political framework in Sudan.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- To read the Assessment follow this link: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/sudan-media-assessment.pdf>
- To read ARTICLE 19's comments of the Sudan draft media laws follow this link: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/sudan-draft-media-laws-07.pdf>
- For more information, please contact Africa Programme Officer, Roxanne Abdulali, roxanne@article19.org
- This project is funded by the EC, NMFA and UNESCO.
- 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.