



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Arab Charter for Satellite TV: A major setback to freedom of expression in the region**

**ARTICLE 19 condemns the adoption of the ‘Principles for Organising Satellite TV in the Arab World’ charter agreed yesterday by the Arab Ministers of Information in Egypt.**

*“These principles constitute a major set back to freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the Arab world. They attempt to muzzle what has become the main source of independent news and information for millions of people in the region. Once again, intolerance and control prevail over freedom and the free and diverse flow of information.”*  
said Dr. Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19’s executive director.

The meeting was convened in Cairo on Tuesday 12 February 2008 at the request of Egypt and with the support of Saudi Arabia. The final non-binding document, adopted by all member states of the Arab League with the exception of Qatar and Lebanon, requires Satellite TV broadcasting in the region:

- not to offend the leaders or national and religious symbols in the Arab world...
- not to damage social harmony, national unity, public order or traditional values...
- to conform with the religious and ethical values of Arab society and take account of its family structure...
- to refrain from broadcasting anything which calls into question God, the monotheistic religions, the prophets, sects or symbols of the various religious communities...and
- to protect Arab identity from the harmful effects of globalization”,

The document threatens to "withdraw, freeze or not renew the work permits of media which will break the regulations". It calls on member states to introduce all necessary measures in their national legislations in order to ensure that the document’s principles are fully implemented.

The provisions, if implemented, will inevitably mute and hinder the only avenue for free expression in the region: satellite TV. They stand in direct contradiction with Article 32 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights which guarantees the right to information and freedom of expression and which was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States in 2004. The provisions also violate article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by many governments in the region.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- For more information, please contact **Sarah Richani, ARTICLE 19 Programme Officer**, [sarah@article19.org](mailto:sarah@article19.org), +961 5431426.
- 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.