



For immediate release – 8 July 2010

PRESS RELEASE

**Nepal: ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum Submission to HRC
Universal Periodic Review**

ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum have outlined their concerns about the failure of the government of Nepal to protect the right to freedom of expression in a Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC). The Submission, filed in preparation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Nepal at the tenth session of the Working Group on the UPR (January 2011), describes the current challenges to freedom of expression and freedom of information in Nepal, and highlights the perilous environment journalists and media workers operate in.

The joint Submission by ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum highlights the failure of the Interim Constitution, the Press and Publication Act and the National Broadcasting Act to comply with international standards on freedom of expression, and the failure of media regulation to promote independence and transparency.

Citing examples of killings and violent assaults on journalists and media workers, the Submission brings to attention the risks faced by journalists and media workers and the lack of effective investigation and culture of impunity that has created a precedent whereby perpetrators see attacks pass without consequence.

ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum are also concerned about the lack of effective implementation of the Right to Information Act to give a full effect to the right to freedom of information, and the exclusion of vulnerable groups and minorities from the decision making process..

ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum calls on the Human Rights Council to address the concerns raised in the Submission and to raise the following recommendations to the government of Nepal:

- The next Constitution of Nepal, due in 2011, must adequately protect the right to freedom of expression in line with the international standards, in particular by defining restrictions and limitations that match international requirements.
- The government must amend the Press and Publication Act and the National Broadcasting Act to adequately protect the right to freedom of expression in line with international requirements and the protection of media guaranteed in the Constitution.

- Where regulation of the media must exist, the government must create regulatory laws according to international standards and establish regulatory bodies that are independent from government and that operate transparently.
- The government must create a safe environment for journalists and media workers and protect them against violent attacks.
- The government must conduct effective, impartial and speedy investigations into attacks on journalists and media workers, addressing political interference, and bring perpetrators of violence to justice. In particular, the government must conclude the investigations into the killings of Uma Singh, Jamim Shah and Arun Singhaniya, and prosecute the attackers.
- The government must implement the Right to Information Act and Regulations effectively, make the National Information Commission and Information Commissioners independent from government, and ensure that all people are aware of and able to realise the right to information.
- The government must continue to mandate representation of minority and vulnerable groups in decision making bodies to ensure that their voices are heard in all levels of decision-making.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Oliver Spencer, Advocacy Officer, ARTICLE 19, at oliver@article19.org; Sue Ghimire, ARTICLE 19, at sue@article19.org; or Taranath Dahal, Freedom Forum, info@freedomforum.org.np
- For a copy of ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum's Submission to the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, see: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/reports/nepal-report.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.
- Freedom Forum is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit civil society organization working for the causes of democracy, protection and promotion of human rights, press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information in Nepal.