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PRESS RELEASE

**UN HRC: International Community Urge Nepal to Address
Impunity and Protect Journalists**

Geneva, 25.01.2011: At the tenth session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group today, countries from around the world recommended the Nepali government immediately address the growing impunity in the country, and protect journalists and human rights defenders from attacks.

“The international community has come together during today’s review to highlight the growing concern about impunity in the country and call for the government to address the worrying situation,” said Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

ARTICLE 19 attended the UPR of Nepal, during which impunity was by far the most repeated issue by the delegates, with reference to the continuous attacks against media workers and human rights defenders in Nepal.

The Czech Republic, Canada, France and the United States of America recommended the government of Nepal safeguard the security of journalists and implement adequate measures for the protection and investigation of crimes against journalists and human rights defenders.

The Czech Republic specifically called for thorough investigation and prosecution into the case of the murder of female reporter Uma Singh in 2009. Norway also recommended the government to investigate attacks against female journalists and prosecute the perpetrators. France urged the government to address the lack of enforcement of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and information.

Impunity was also addressed by Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland and the UK.

In response, the government of Nepal pledged to tackle impunity and address the human rights concerns of the delegates. But the government was unwilling to accept the role of the Nepali Army in the continuation of widespread impunity, arguing that:

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“the Nepali Army are fully supportive of human rights and any issues are not supported by policy ... The Nepali Army is the source of Nepali democracy.”

The recommendations made by the international community at the UPR of Nepal, were in line with those made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stakeholders’ report, to which ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum jointly contributed.

In their joint submission in August 2010, ARTICLE 19 and Freedom Forum highlighted five areas of concern, including (1) killing of and violent attacks against journalists and human rights defenders, (2) impunity for attacks and political protection, (3) freedom of expression in the Interim Constitution and overall legal framework fail to meet international standards, (4) regulation of the media fails to promote independence and transparency, (5) the government has failed to give a full effect to the right to freedom of information.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- 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/submissions/nepal-report.pdf>
- The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established in 2006 as a way for the UN Human Rights Council, a set of country delegations elected to represent each region worldwide, to review the human rights situation in every state that is a member of the UN
- 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.