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ARTICLE 19

For immediate release – 18 October 2008

Timor Leste: Comments on Official Media Recommendations

ARTICLE 19 has issued a set of Comments on the document “Important Points for Social Communication Law” (Points) produced by the Legislation Committee for Social Communication (KOLKOS) of Timor Leste. While welcoming many of the Points, which provide a basis for media freedom, the Comments also highlight some problems.

The Points, which were adopted by KOLKOS, an official body, were based on consultations with local media representatives. They were intended as input into the process of developing a ‘social communication’ or media law, which has been under discussion for some time in Timor Leste.

Some of ARTICLE 19’s key recommendations were:

- Journalists should not be required to obtain accreditation from the Press Council.
- Further thought needs to be given to media regulation. For broadcasters, a system of licensing under the oversight of an independent regulator should be put in place.
- More detail is required regarding the manner of making appointments to the Press Council and the structure of the ‘organ’ responsible for broadcast regulation.
- Journalists should not be required to show their identity cards to obtain access to information.
- The powers of the Press Council to impose sanctions should be limited to requiring the offending media outlet to carry a statement.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact Toby Mendel, Senior Director for Law, a19law@hfx.eastlink.ca, +1 902 431-3688.
- The ARTICLE 19 Comments are available at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/timor-leste-social-communication-law.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.