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PRESS RELEASE

Hungary: Revise Media Laws Promptly and Thoroughly

London, 9.2.11: ARTICLE 19 welcomes the Hungarian government’s pledge to amend its media laws in line with international standards, following pressure from the international community.

“ARTICLE 19 repeatedly called on the Hungarian authorities in 2010 and 2011 to address the shortfalls in their media laws. We welcome the recent commitment by Victor Orban’s government to do so and we offer our support to the government and partner organisations to ensure compliance with international standards,” says Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

ARTICLE 19’s statement, *Hungary: Controversial New Media Laws Cast Shadow on Presidency*, outlined our main concerns with the current laws, including the restrictive content requirements for broadcasting and print media and online publications, the highly centralised regime of media regulation placed under control of the prime minister, the high fines envisaged for violations of the media law by media and journalists, and the weak regime of protection of journalists’ sources.

Hungary is obligated under international law to ensure that the media fully enjoy their rights. Genuine reform of the Hungarian media laws should include:

- Re-organisation of the media regulation authority to ensure its independence from the government
- Abolishment of the requirement for balanced reporting by all media and of ban on incitement of hatred against “nations”, “any majority” or “churches”
- Abolishment of the special protection to churches and religious groups against offensive speech
- Abolishment of the requirement for outright registration for print and internet services to start operation
- Adoption of a new provision for protection of journalist sources in line with international law
- Reduction of the sanctions for violations of journalists and media of their obligations under the media law.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Boyko Boev, Legal Officer, at boyko@article19.org or at +44 20 7324 2500
- The statement *Hungary: Controversial New Media Laws Cast Shadow on Presidency* can be read at: www.article19.org/pdfs/press/hungary-controversial.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.