



For immediate release – 13 January 2010

PRESS RELEASE

**Jordan: Courts Extend Law to Curb Internet Freedoms**

**ARTICLE 19** notes with concern that the Kingdom of Jordan’s highest court, the Court of Cassation, has amended the country’s Press and Publications Law to extend government control over online content. The court’s decision, issued last week but published only today, empowers authorities to prosecute or impose fines on journalists, bloggers and editors for publishing online material that may be deemed offensive or imply criticism of the Government, national unity or the economy.

The internet has provided an important forum for debate and criticism within contemporary Jordan, especially in light of existing restrictions on the print media under this same Press and Publications Law. A number of prominent journalists from print newspapers have turned to the internet where they have enjoyed more freedom to share critical opinions. There are around 30 news websites that enjoy wide popularity in the Kingdom, in addition to hundreds of active bloggers. The Government has threatened several times in recent years to restrict online content and control material published on the internet, but has faced fierce opposition.

*“ARTICLE 19 is concerned that the extension of the Press and Publications Law will lead to wide self-censorship among the online media, especially as individual writers and commentators seek to avoid heavy fines or criminal prosecution,”* comments Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *“This legislation helps to create an atmosphere of intimidation that closes the space for public debate and goes against the principles of freedom of expression and opinion.”*

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- 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.