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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Uganda: ARTICLE 19 Welcomes Court Decision in Seditious Case Against Journalist**

**A Ugandan Magistrates Court in Kampala dismissed seditious charges against former radio presenter Robert Kalundi Serumaga, who faced six counts of seditious for making anti-President statements during the September 2009 Kampala riots. The dismissal of the charges marks an improvement in the freedom of expression situation in the country. The court ruling comes on the heels of a ground-breaking decision passed by the Constitutional Court in August 2010 which abolished criminal seditious, thereby ensuring Uganda's compliance with its international human rights obligations.**

ARTICLE 19 welcomes these recent developments in Uganda, as the organisation believes that seditious, criminal defamation and other insult laws are premised on the incorrect hypothesis that it is wrong to pass judgment on public figures.

The abolishment of criminal seditious in Uganda not only has positive consequences for the Ugandan media, opposition parties' candidates and human rights defenders – who no longer need to fear being prosecuted – but could also potentially extend its influence regionally. Seditious laws are enforced in the majority of African countries. ARTICLE 19 is calling on all African countries to abolish seditious laws and criminal defamation in general.

*“We welcome Uganda's abolishment of seditious, as it sets a new chapter for the country marked by its compliance with its international human rights obligations including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which Uganda signed and ratified,”* says Dr Agnes Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.

*“The abolishment also brings home the force of the Table Mountain Declaration on Abolishing Insult Laws in Africa and the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa,”* continued Callamard.

There are currently 10 journalists who collectively face some 22 seditious charges, some of which have been accumulated since 2005. The strong opinion of the courts in Uganda adds to a clear voice of free speech organisations that such laws provide illegitimate limitations to freedom of expression and must be struck out.

*“These recent developments give us the zeal to do our work without fear of being arrested and unending criminal charges of sedition preferred against us.”* said Geoffrey Ssebagala, Programmes Coordinator, Human Rights Network for Journalists in Uganda.

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**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.