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**PRESS RELEASE**

**European Court of Human Rights: ARTICLE 19 Calls for High-Level Protection of Journalists**

**ARTICLE 19 has submitted an *amicus curiae* brief to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of a Dutch magazine that was forced to disclose unpublished photographs to prosecutors or face being shut down. The brief calls on the Court to affirm high levels of protections of journalists.**

The brief was submitted with three other media rights organisations: the Media Legal Defence Initiative; the Committee for the Protection of Journalists; and the Open Society Justice Initiative, along with the Guardian News and Media group. Over a dozen major newspapers and media organisations from around the world also endorsed a statement in support of the brief.

The publishers of *AutoWeek* magazine were visited by police in 2002, following an article on illegal street racing. The police arrested the editor, threatening to shut down the entire publishing network for several days and keep the editor in detention unless photographs and documents relating to these races were handed over. In March 2009, a panel chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, in a controversial 4-3 decision, ruled that the searches showed “a regrettable lack of moderation” but were not a violation of freedom of expression as protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Grand Chamber of the Court agreed to hear the case in September 2009.

The *amicus* brief submitted by ARTICLE 19 claims that the chamber decision is in serious conflict with previous decisions of the Court, including the groundbreaking 1995 case of *Goodwin v. UK*, which firmly established the rule of protection of sources in European law. The brief extensively reviews national developments both in Europe and internationally on protection of sources over the past 15 years, and calls on the Court to reaffirm this right and to require that every member state follows strict procedural rules before they attempt to obtain confidential information from journalists.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For more information please contact: David Banisar, Senior Legal Consultant, [Banisar@article19.org](mailto:Banisar@article19.org) or +44 20 7324 2500.
- To read the full text of the *amicus* brief, go to: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/sanoma-uitgevers-b.v.-v-the-netherlands.pdf>

- To read the statement signed by media organisations in support of the *amicus* brief, go to: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/europe-weakening-protection-of-sources.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.