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PRESS RELEASE

Extraordinary Historical Moment and Opportunity for Egypt

London, 11.02.2011: As Hosni Mubarak’s resignation is announced, ARTICLE 19 calls on the transitional government to abide by the will of the Egyptian people and instigate swift democratic reforms, including an immediate end to censorship of the media and the release of political prisoners.

“Tunisia and Egypt have shown the way toward liberty in the Middle East. The people have spoken out – women, young people, men, overcoming fears, denouncing oppression, human rights violations and corruption, and demanding democratic reforms. This is an extraordinary moment for Egypt – it should quickly and swiftly be translated into an opportunity for real and in-depth reforms and changes. A pathway paved with full protection for human rights, including freedom of expression, is the only way forward for a stable, confident and just Egypt.” says Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

18 days of mostly non-violent protests have brought to an end the 30 year dictatorship of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak who has finally step down as president of Egypt today. The Military Council is said to have provisionally taken power.

Triggered by protests in Tunisia, which resulted in the toppling of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, protesters across much of Egypt over the last 18 days have called for reform and for Mubarak to leave. Demonstrations have also taken place across the Middle East and North Africa.

There have been widespread allegations of human rights violations and disappearances during the protests, and many journalists and human rights defenders have been detained. Accusations of torture of protesters are beginning to emerge, as more and more people feel safer to come forward to tell their stories.

ARTICLE 19 calls for the process of democratic and human rights reform to begin immediately. All imprisoned peaceful protesters and political prisoners, including journalists, should be released. The authorities should immediately investigate and disclose the fate and whereabouts all those who are missing, and immediately inform their families.

The transition and reform processes require, and should be based on, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, transparency, and the ability of all Egyptians, men and women, religious and other minorities and vulnerable groups, to speak out

and participate equally and without fear in the reform process and the democratic running of their country.

ARTICLE 19 also urges Egypt's neighbours to take heed of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and immediately begin a process of real democratisation. In the words of Polish Nobel peace prize winner Lech Wałęsa, *"You have no chance to win. The only choice you have is between defeat with bloodshed and defeat without"*.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Dr Agnes Callamard, +44 20 7324 2500
- 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.