



For immediate release – 20 May 2010

PRESS RELEASE

Thailand: Attacks on Media Must Stop

Following the surrender of “Red Shirt” leaders and the imposing of curfew in Bangkok, all sides must stop attacking the media in order to allow the media to report freely on the development of the crisis. The media must also uphold the professional standards of objectivity to gain public trust and credibility.

Protests across Thailand have continued today following weeks of growing conflict. Yesterday the Thai army surrounded and used live arms to disperse protesters calling for the dissolving of parliament and announcing early elections, killing many. Members of the Red Shirts, largely consisting of rural poor, have in recent weeks targeted national media houses claiming that they are biased towards the urban elite. The government, on the other hand, has blocked around 4,500 websites and former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s Twitter feed amongst other censorship measures.

On Wednesday, the Red Shirts stormed national TV station Channel 3 and set cars on fire. Journalists at *The Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* also evacuated their building in fear of their safety. Following the crackdown, some protestors also turned on the media, threatening photographers taking pictures of retreating Red Shirts in particular.

The crisis has taken a heavy toll on journalists. International and national journalists have been killed and injured in the course of the crisis. In Wednesday’s army crackdown, Fabio Polenghi, an Italian photojournalist was killed by gunshot. He is the second journalist to have lost his life after Japanese cameraman for *Reuters*, Hiroyuki Muramoto, who was fatally shot on 10 April. At least five other international journalists from the Netherlands, USA, Canada and the UK, and a Thai photographer working for Australian Broadcasting Corporation have been injured thus far. Besides journalists working for foreign media, two local newspaper photographers - one working for *Matichon* and the other for *The Nation* – also suffered injuries in recent clashes.

“Such attacks, as well as threats to journalists and media censorship, seriously undermine a free media environment much needed at this critical moment when the public needs updated information from all sources to understand the situation,” says Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

ARTICLE 19 calls on both sides to end the attacks on journalists and media censorship, and to ensure the right to information and right to expression are not compromised.

ARTICLE 19 also urges journalists to adhere to the professional standards of reporting, upholding objectivity and refraining from inciting violence.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Amy Sim, Asia Programme Officer, amy@article19.org, ARTICLE 19, +44 20 7324 2500
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works globally 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. For more information on ARTICLE 19 please visit www.article19.org