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## **Nepal: New Government Must Safeguard Freedom of Expression**

**ARTICLE 19, along with the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and Freedom Forum (FF), congratulate Madhav Kumar Nepal on his election as Prime Minister of Nepal. Furthermore, we note that freedom of expression remains under serious threat in Nepal and call on the new government to take decisive steps to stop attacks on journalists and to establish a legal framework which fosters a free flow of information and ideas.**

*“ARTICLE 19, FNJ and Freedom Forum strongly urge the new government of Nepal to protect media workers and to bring to an end the climate of impunity for the perpetrators of attacks. There is also an urgent need for structural and legal change to protect freedom of expression. This is necessary for the government to demonstrate in practice its stated commitment to democracy,”* says Taranath Dahal, Chairperson, Freedom Forum.

We specifically call on the new government to implement the *Agenda for Change*, a publication launched by ARTICLE 19, FNJ and Freedom Forum in February 2009 that contains a comprehensive set of recommendations for freedom expression reform in Nepal. Key priorities, in addition to protection of media workers, include:

- Taking steps to implement properly the Right to Information Act 2064, including establishing appropriate procedures within all public bodies for processing requests.
- Implementing the Working Journalist Act 2051, including putting in place an effective monitoring system.
- Adopting a new broadcasting law which puts oversight of broadcast regulation in the hands of an independent body and putting in place a fair system for licensing, including for community broadcasters.
- Transforming the existing public broadcasters into public service broadcasters.
- Abolishing criminal defamation and adopting new civil defamation rules which are consistent with international standards in this area.

ARTICLE 19, FNJ and FF also urge the government do all that it can to ensure that the new constitution provides strong protection for freedom of expression, in line with international standards.

### **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 freedom of expression. The Federation of Nepali

Journalists (FNJ) is the umbrella organisation of journalists in Nepal. Freedom Forum is a Nepalese human rights organisation working for press freedom and the right to information.