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PRESS RELEASE

Sudan: ARTICLE 19 Condemns Imposition of Censorship

ARTICLE 19 condemns the recent action by the government of Sudan to impose press censorship on newspapers. The decision has resulted in many newspapers being off the streets and constitutes a major blow to press freedom, freedom of expression and democracy.

On 19 May, the government of Sudan, re-introduced the previous censorship mechanism for newspapers. Under the system, which was previously lifted by President El Bashir on 27 September 2009, all newspapers are screened by censors from the National State Intelligence Services before they are published.

Earlier in the week the state security shut down *Rai Al Shaab* newspaper and detained four of its journalists without any charge. The paper is associated to the Popular National Congress Party, and its leader, Al Turabi.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the authorities to rescind the decision which contravenes the 2005 Sudan Interim Constitution, as well as regional and international obligations on the promotion and protection of human rights, and freedom of expression, to which Sudan is a party.

In an interview with ARTICLE 19, Faisal Elbagir, the Coordinator General of Journalists for Human Rights in Sudan, said: *“we were not astonished at all, by the action of the security imposing the pre-censorship, it reflects the nature of the regime, which is anti freedom of expression and free press.”* Elbagir calls upon the government of Sudan, to immediately stop censorship and respect freedom of expression, and freedom of the media, and the right of the Sudanese society as a whole to access information.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the government of Sudan to:

- Adhere to the spirit and the letter of the 2005 Sudan Interim Constitution, especially s.39
- Release detained journalists or charge them in a competent court of law
- Repeal legislation that restricts the ability to critically appraise the government. Such laws and practices are not necessary in a democratic state and serve to impede democratic participation and decision-making
- Fulfil its international human rights obligations under in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Sudan acceded to on 18 March 1986

- Fulfil its regional human rights obligations, in particular under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Sudan ratified on 18 February 1986.

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.