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PRESS RELEASE

Council of Europe: ARTICLE 19 Testifies on Gaps in the Protection of Journalists' Sources

As the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe examines the protection of journalists' sources in Europe, ARTICLE 19 calls attention to recent cases of journalists being arrested, press officials searched and equipment seized in order to identify sources. ARTICLE 19 recommends that Member States take specific steps to improve the legal protection of journalists' sources.

In a written submission to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), ARTICLE 19 provides its input in the preparation of a report on the protection of journalists' sources in Europe. The report is to be released next year by Morgen Johansson, a PACE special rapporteur on this issue.

Reviewing the current regulations for protection of journalists' sources in the Member States, ARTICLE 19 highlights a number of gaps and concludes that the protection given is still inadequate. Throughout Europe narrow definitions of who can be regarded as a 'journalist' excludes some individuals that are professionally engaged in the collection of information, such as researchers and bloggers, from protection. Moreover Member States have different exceptions to the right to protection of journalists' sources. Often harsh sanctions are taken to force journalists to disclose their sources; enforcement officers use searches and seizures to discover the identity of journalists' sources. ARTICLE 19 recommends that Member States adopt special laws on protection of journalists' sources and abolish legal provisions which put the confidentiality of sources at risk.

“Without the guarantee of anonymity, people are being discouraged from coming forward with information on corruption, misgovernment or the activities of organised criminals”, says Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. “States should therefore guarantee the confidentiality of journalists' sources in order to ensure protection of the right to freedom of expression.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Boyko Boev, Legal Officer at: +44 207 324 2500 or boyko@article19.org.
- The full version of the submission on the protection of journalists' source in Europe is available at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/council-of-europe-protection-of-journalists-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.