



For immediate release – 30 March 2009

Yemen: Pattern of Threats and Attacks on Journalists

ARTICLE 19 is monitoring with great concern the most recent pattern of threats and attacks on journalists in Yemen.

“No journalist should be arrested or attacked because of his/her work and opinion,” says Dr. Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. “Authorities should immediately investigate these incidents and provide effective protection to journalists under threat.”

Some of the recent incidents include:

- Managing Editor of *Mareb Press*, Mohammad Salhi, was abducted on 19 March 2009 by security officers and imprisoned for eight hours before his release. Salhi was arrested for allegedly trying to take photos of the scene where four South Korean tourists were killed and three others wounded in a terrorist attack in the city of Shibam on 14 March
- On 23 March Abdel Malek Shrai, journalist for the independent *Al-Ayyam* daily, was attacked during his coverage of the murder story of the general director of Khdair governorate. He was beaten up, slandered and banned from writing about the case
- Mohammad Shar’abi, an editor at the independent *Al Diyar* newspaper, has received life threatening messages because of his critical writings and opinions. On 24 March his house in Taiz governorate was bombed. Shar’abi had also been attacked before when unknown assailants shot at his house in November 2008 while his family and children were inside
- Associated Press correspondent Ahmad Al Haj has also received threatening messages on his mobile phone from a private unknown caller who described him as an agent and mercenary
- In addition, independent journalists in Yemen are being prosecuted for simply doing their job. There are six legal cases against the Nasserite newspaper, *Al Wahdawi*, for publishing stories related to corruption and investigative material

The one positive note in this negative atmosphere is a speech delivered at the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate General Assembly in mid March by Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh in which he instructed the government to grant licenses to satellite broadcasting channels and to allow the transmission of private radios to any party who request it.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Yemeni authorities to speed up investigations into these serious attacks and violations of media freedoms and enforce stricter measures to protect Yemeni journalists.

ARTICLE 19 welcomes President's Saleh statements towards enhanced press freedom, and calls on the government to implement the new policies rapidly and effectively.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information: please contact Sa'eda Kilani, sa'eda@article19.org, Tel:+962-79-9860004
- 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.