



For immediate release – 15 April 2008

Yemen: ARTICLE 19 Urges Yemeni Authorities to Investigate Threats against *Al Jazeera* Journalists

ARTICLE 19 notes with concern that the Sana'a bureau of *Al Jazeera* satellite channel has recently received threats via text message, warning against correspondents' coverage of events in southern Yemen.

Murad Hashem, *Al Jazeera* bureau chief in Sana'a, and reporter Ahmad al Shalafi, both received threats on their mobile phones on 11 April, from what is believed to be a mobile phone located in Saudi Arabia. The threats warned both journalists against covering any events or news relating to southern Yemen.

There were no further details of who made the threats or what specific events were being referred to, but ARTICLE 19 understands that this may relate to coverage of ongoing clashes between Yemeni security forces and suspected Islamist fighters in the region around Aden.

ARTICLE 19 strongly condemns the threats and urges the Yemeni authorities to investigate the incident.

"Journalists should not be intimidated for doing their jobs," said Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *"They should feel safe when reporting on events and the authorities must provide adequate protection for journalists who request it and who feel threatened."*

Across the country, Yemeni journalists have expressed solidarity with Hashem and Shalafi, considering the incident a grave danger for the journalistic profession. The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate denounced the threats as a new intimidating tactic to quash freedom of the press in Yemen. It has called on authorities in Yemen and Saudi Arabia to investigate into the incident and reveal the identity of the culprits.

This is not the first time *Al Jazeera* correspondents in Yemen have experienced harassment. In 2006, Shalafi's telephone conversations with his wife were tapped and distributed by email to other journalists.

This style of personal intimidation has been relatively common in Yemen in recent years and several journalists have been harassed in a similar manner. For example, Mohammad Shar'abi, an editor at the independent *Al Diyar* newspaper, has received threats against his life because of his critical writings and opinions. Associated Press correspondent Ahmad Al Haj has also received threatening messages on his mobile phone from an unknown caller who described him as an agent and mercenary.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the Yemeni authorities to properly investigate all threats against journalists and media workers, and to support the principles of media diversity and freedom by creating a safe working environment for journalists.

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.