

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/libya-repressive-new-law-criminalizes-07-05-2012,42581.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Libya

Criticism banned

Repressive new law criminalizes insulting government institutions

7 May 2012

Reporters Without Borders calls on Libya's interim parliament, the National Transitional Council (NTC), to repeal the law criminalizing any "insult to the Libyan people and its institutions" that it adopted on 2 May.

"This law contravenes the interim constitutional provisions that the NTC adopted and the international law to which it is subject," Reporters Without Borders said. "Criminalizing certain opinions, going so far as to make them punishable by imprisonment, endangers freedom of expression and information, especially as the law's criteria are vague and imprecise and leave a great deal of room for arbitrary interpretation.

"The terms of this law are sadly reminiscent of the Gaddafi regime's oppressive legislation and its adoption poses a threat to the democratic transition in Libya and to all the media that have emerged since the start of the revolution. We therefore urge the NTC to repeal it in its entirety."

Reporters Without Borders stresses the need for freedom of opinion and expression to be reaffirmed in the future constitution and the need for a media law that protects these fundamental constitutional freedoms.

Law 37 criminalizes "false news and information" or "propaganda" that "endanger national security, terrorize the public or undermine public morale." Comments harming the 17 February Libyan Revolution, glorifying the former regime and its leader, Col. Gaddafi, or his sons, or insulting the Libyan people, their flag and Islam are all also criminal offences under the new law.

All these offences are punishable by imprisonment under the new law, which does not specify the length of the jail terms that can be imposed except in the case of "rumours of information" causing harm to the country, for which a life sentence is possible.

The ban on any form of opposition to or criticism of the 17 February Revolution seems to have been based directly on article 195 of Col. Gaddafi's criminal code penalizing any attack on the Great Al-Fatah Revolution or its Leader.

Photo : AFP

You can download those documents on our website :

- Repressive new law criminalizes insulting government institutions - In arabic, (PDF - 42 kb)
 - , (JPEG - 150.7 kb)
-