

PRESS RELEASE

Egypt: Military's closure of television channels is violation of freedom of expression and information

ARTICLE 19

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ARTICLE 19 is concerned by the Egyptian military's decision on 3 July 2013 to shut down five private satellite television channels. The decision came just a few hours after the military coup that removed the elected president, Mohamed Morsi, and suspended the constitution.

The five channels are the Muslim Brotherhood-controlled *Egypt 25*, and four supporting the Islamist movement: *Al-Hafez*, *Al-Nass*, *Al-Rhmane*, and *Al-Khalijiya*. Many journalists working in these stations were detained overnight, interrogated and released without charge.

“We consider this decision a serious attack on freedom of expression and a deliberate attempt to clamp down on the diversity of political speech that is much needed in the current democratic climate in Egypt,” said Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

The military and the police also raided the Cairo offices of the Qatar-based pan-Arab satellite news channels *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Jazeera Al-Mubashed* on 3 July, confiscating cameras and equipment and arresting director Ayman Jab and director of the studio, Ahmed Hassan, who were released two days later.

Other Arab religious television stations were also jammed by Egyptian government-owned Nilesat satellite operator. These include Palestinian Hamas-affiliated *Al-Quds* and *Al-Aqsa* channels and the Jordannian *Al-Yarmouk*, while they were covering demonstrations by the supporters of the ousted President Morsi.

ARTICLE 19 believes that the closure of the private television channels, the arrest of media workers and the jamming of foreign satellite channels are acts of censorship that have been executed without any court order. We therefore, urge the Egyptian authorities to:

- Allow the private television stations to re-open and their channels to re-broadcast without delay, and to cease any detention or harassment of their staff
- Protect the right of Egyptians to seek and receive information about the current political situation through any media and regardless of frontiers
- Respect the right to freedom of expression of all political parties through the media of their choice.