

AI Index: PRE 01/309/2009
19 August 2009

Afghanistan: Electoral Media Restrictions Undermine Democratic Process

On the eve of the presidential elections in Afghanistan, Amnesty International has called on the Afghan government to reverse its ban on national and international media from reporting on cases of violence and insecurity occurring during Thursday's election.

The decision was made following a National Security Council meeting on Tuesday and was announced by the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry said that journalists must avoid reporting on any election-related violence or security incidents that may occur during polling.

"The Afghan government should immediately dissolve the restrictions on media reporting and allow the national and international media to practice freedom of expression and the right of the people to access information," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Program Director.

In the run up to the election, Amnesty International has documented intimidation of critical Afghan journalists by both the Afghan government and Taleban insurgents.

Amnesty International believes that restricting media reporting on election day will undermine the efforts of the international community and the achievements of the Afghan government for maintaining freedom of expression and access to information in Afghanistan.

"Freedom of expression lies at the heart of the democratic process. The Afghan government is contradicting this very principle in trying to restrict reporting by journalists at a time when the Afghan people need more information, not less," said Sam Zarifi.