



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **FRENCH SHOULD SCRAP ARMENIAN GENOCIDE LAW**

**ARTICLE 19 is calling on the French authorities to scrap proposals to adopt a law prohibiting any denial of the 1915 Armenian genocide. A draft law of this nature was passed by the French National Assembly on 12 October.**

*“This sort of law, whereby the State effectively elevates history to dogma, has no place in a democracy.”* said Dr. Agnès Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19. *“Laws prohibiting incitement to hatred – so-called hate speech laws – are a more appropriate means of addressing problems of racism.”*

The proposed law makes it an offence to deny the existence of the 1915 Armenian genocide, punishable by up to one year of imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 45,000 Euro. The Armenian genocide itself was officially recognised by France in a law passed in 2001.

ARTICLE 19 considers all laws prohibiting the denial of genocide – including Holocaust denial laws – to breach international guarantees of freedom of expression. It is inherently illegitimate for the State to impose a blanket ban on discussion of historical matters. Such laws are both unnecessary – since generic hate speech laws already prohibit incitement to hatred – and open to abuse to stifle legitimate historical debate and research.

The European Court of Human Rights has already found France to be in breach of its obligation to respect freedom of expression for using its Holocaust denial law to stifle debate about the role of the Vichy government during the Second World War, debate which the Court described as: “[P]art of the efforts that every country must make to debate its own history openly and dispassionately.”

ARTICLE 19 calls upon the French authorities to reject attempts to pass this proposal into law and to repeal, or at least substantially revise, its Holocaust denial law so that it applies only to cases where the denial amounts to incitement to hatred.

ENDS

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