



World Association of Newspapers

ASSOCIATION MONDIALE DES JOURNAUX • ASOCIACIÓN MUNDIAL DE PERIÓDICOS • WELTVERBAND DER ZEITUNGEN

His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh
President of Yemen

4 February 2008

Your Excellency,

We are writing on behalf of the World Association of Newspapers and the World Editors Forum, which represent 18,000 publications in 102 countries, to express our serious concern at the blocking of at least eight websites.

According to reports, in recent months at least eight websites carrying news and opinions on Yemeni affairs have been blocked by the government-owned Internet service provider. YemenPortal, YemenHurr and Al-Teef became unavailable to domestic users on 19 January, joining at least five others – Hdramut, Al-Yemen, AdenPress, AdenNews and SoutalGnoub – that have apparently been blocked without explanation.

YemenPortal, for example, which provides a space for websites, bloggers and citizens to have their voices heard, can be viewed internationally, though it is unavailable domestically. The service provider, which is run by the Ministry of Telecommunications, has reportedly denied deliberately blocking access but has given no explanation as to why it and the other sites are unavailable.

Each of the blocked websites contains some political content, some being overtly critical of the government and others, such as YemenPortal, providing access to hundreds of thousands of pages, only some of which contain political content.

We respectfully remind you that the censorship of these eight websites is a clear breach of the right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by numerous international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers."

We respectfully call on you to take all necessary steps to ensure that access to the eight websites is immediately re-opened and that they are allowed to publish free from state interference. We urge you to do everything possible to ensure that in future your country fully respects international standards of freedom of expression.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Gavin O'Reilly
President
World Association of Newspapers



George Brock
President
World Editors Forum

WAN is the global organization for the newspaper industry, with formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The organization groups 18,000 newspapers in 102 countries, 12 news agencies and 11 regional and world-wide press groups. WAN is non-governmental and non-profit.