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International Mandates Launch 18th Joint Declaration

Today, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the four specialised mandates tasked with promoting and protecting freedom of expression at the UN, OAS, OSCE and African Commission launched their 18th annual statement, the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Countering Violent Extremism. The Joint Declaration will be presented publicly tomorrow at the main UNESCO World Press Freedom Day in Helsinki. As in previous years, the Centre for Law and Democracy, along with ARTICLE 19, assisted the special mandates in preparing the Joint Declaration.

“The Joint Declaration this year applies a number of established standards to the specific context of initiatives which have been adopted under the umbrella of countering violent extremism”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“Unfortunately, too many States react to threats of violence by adopting unduly broad restrictions on freedom of expression.”*

The Joint Declaration sets out a number of important standards, including the following:

- There should be no discrimination in the text or application of restrictions on freedom of expression.
- The concepts of “violent extremism” and “extremism” should not be used to restrict freedom of expression unless they are clearly and narrowly defined.
- States should not use their power to pressure or reward online intermediaries with a view to restricting lawful content.
- Politicians and other leadership figures in society should refrain from making statements which encourage or promote racism or intolerance.
- States should not adopt blanket prohibitions on encryption and anonymity.
- Measures that weaken digital security tools, such as backdoors and key escrows, are not legitimate because they are inherently disproportionate.

The Report is available at: www.law-democracy.org/live/international-mandates-launch-18th-joint-declaration/.

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