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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Thailand: Report on Defamation Law**

**ARTICLE 19 and the National Press Council of Thailand (NPCT) have jointly launched a Report, the *Impact of Defamation Law on Freedom of Expression in Thailand*. The Report outlines the nature of defamation law in Thailand, as well as the chilling effect it has on freedom of expression.**

ARTICLE 19 and the NPCT believe that this Report comes at a timely moment in Thailand, as ongoing and high-profile defamation cases continue to undermine the ability of the media to report in the public interest.

The Report provides a detailed description of the way in which defamation laws operate in Thailand, at both substantive and procedural levels, and how this impacts on the free flow of information and ideas. It then provides some in-depth examples of cases in which defamation law has been used in Thailand in the context of political speech. The Report also outlines some other restrictions on freedom of expression in Thailand, including the offence of *lèse majesté*, which has been used with increasing frequency in recent years to limit open debate about public authorities.

The last part of the Report contains recommendations for reform of defamation law in Thailand, to bring it into line with international and constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression. These include a call to reform criminal defamation law, to enhance the defences available to a defendant, including by making public figures tolerate a greater degree of criticism than ordinary citizens, and to place overall limits on damage awards.

The Report is part of a larger programme of cooperation between ARTICLE 19 and the NPCT which involves a series of workshops to raise awareness about the problems with the existing defamation laws, and the drafting of alternative defamation legislation. ARTICLE 19 and the NPCT urge the Thai authorities to take action to amend the Thai defamation laws in line with our recommendations. We would be happy to provide support and assistance for this effort.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- The Report is available in English at: [www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/thailand-impact-of-defamation-law-on-freedom-of-expression.pdf](http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/thailand-impact-of-defamation-law-on-freedom-of-expression.pdf) and in Thai at: [www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/thailand-impact-of-defamation-thai.pdf](http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/thailand-impact-of-defamation-thai.pdf)
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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name

from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.