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JOINT SUBMISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS, THE CENTER FOR PROTECTION AND REVIVAL OF LOCAL COMMUNITY RIGHTS, AND DUAYJAI ASSOCIATION FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS TO THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THAILAND

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Composed of 60 eminent judges and lawyers from all regions of the world, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) promotes and protects human rights through the Rule of Law, by using its unique legal expertise to develop and strengthen national and international justice systems. Established in 1952, in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1957, and active on five continents, the ICJ aims to ensure the progressive development and effective implementation of international human rights and international humanitarian law; secure the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; safeguard the separation of powers; and guarantee the independence of the judiciary and legal profession.

The Center for Protection and Revival of Local Community Rights (CPCR), established in 2002, is an organization that provides legal assistance and strengthens legal capacity for local communities, ethnic communities, and vulnerable groups facing unjust enforcement of land and forest laws. It also supports communities affected by environmental impacts from state and private sector projects that adversely affect community rights and the right to a healthy environment. CPCR is based in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Duayjai Association for Humanitarian Affairs (Duayjai Group) was founded in 2010 to provide assistance and consultations to victims of human rights abuses. The group works to promote human rights principles and build sustainable peace through monitoring and tracking situations, providing education to the public and communities, and offering remedies to those affected by violence and conflict. The Association is committed to working in collaboration with communities, government agencies, and international organizations to foster trust, reduce conflict, and strengthen society in vulnerable areas.

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I. Introduction

1. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the Center for Protection and Revival of Local Community Rights (CPCR), and the Duayjai Association for Humanitarian Affairs (Duayjai Group) welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Human Rights Council's (HRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Thailand.
2. In this submission, ICJ, CPCR and Duayjai Group highlight concerns regarding Thailand's failure to fully comply with its international human rights obligations, in law and practice, in relation to the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs), particularly from violence, threats, intimidation, reprisals, and harassment. These concerns include:
 - a. the lack of an adequate framework for the protection of HRDs;
 - b. killings of HRDs;
 - c. the lack of progress in uncovering the fate and whereabouts of HRDs who have allegedly disappeared;
 - d. extraterritorial "abductions" of HRDs and political activists;
 - e. the deportation of non-Thai HRDs;
 - f. online smear campaigns and spyware attacks against HRDs ;
 - g. other forms of offline harassment against HRDs; and
 - h. the misuse of judicial proceedings, including strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), against HRDs.
3. The concerns raised in this submission have been identified, documented, and legally analysed by the three organizations for more than a decade. The ICJ's report,ⁱ *Dictating the Internet: Curtailing Free Expression and Information Online in Thailand*—which analyses domestic laws inconsistent with international human rights law and standards and their use to target HRDs for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and political participation—has also informed this submission.
4. Many of the cases reported below were documented through a project jointly implemented by ICJ, CPCR, and Duayjai Group, with the support of Oxfam. The project documents violence, threats, intimidation, reprisals, and harassment—including SLAPPs—against HRDs advocating for land, environmental, and indigenous peoples' rights, particularly those from ethnic, ethno-religious, and indigenous groups in Thailand's southern border provinces, North, and Northeast.

II. Gaps in the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

3. During the third UPR cycle in 2021, Thailand supported recommendations to take comprehensive measures to ensure a safe, respectful, and enabling environment for civil society and HRDs—including women, youth, lawyers, media actors, academics, and other civil society actors—so that they are free from persecution, intimidation, harassment, and violence, and can operate freely while fully exercising their rights to freedom of expression (including online), peaceful assembly, and association.ⁱⁱ Thailand also supported recommendations to ensure prompt, thorough, transparent, and independent investigations into all reported cases of attacks, intimidation, and harassment of HRDs.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. However, HRDs in Thailand continue to be at risk of being killed, of harassment, and attacks, both offline and online, including through the abuse of judicial processes—

namely, SLAPPs—due to their work or for speaking out on issues of public interest. As a result, HRDs’ exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, including online, peaceful assembly, association, and participation in public affairs—as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and by which Thailand is bound—is seriously threatened. The existing legal framework to address these concerns also remains insufficient and inadequate, as elaborated below.

A. Inadequate legal framework for the protection of HRDs

5. To our knowledge, the only existing official documents that explicitly recognize the role of HRDs in Thailand—both of which, in any event, lacks legal force—are the Second National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (2023–2027) (NAP on BHR),^{iv} which sets out commitments and priorities to address adverse human rights impacts arising from business activities; and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2025–2027) (NAP WPS), which promotes gender equality and human security, including women’s roles in peacebuilding, prevention, and recovery.^v
6. Under the NAP on BHR, authorities are tasked with reviewing and improving laws and mechanisms to protect HRDs—including women HRDs and other groups at risk—and developing measures to prevent SLAPPs. However, no tangible progress has been observed on the former, and only limited progress on the latter, mainly through the Ministry of Justice’s proposed Prevention of SLAPP Act in early 2025, which remains at a preliminary stage and has not yet been submitted to the Cabinet or the Council of State.^{vi}
7. Moreover, the NAP was adopted as a Cabinet Resolution and lacks legally binding force, limiting its enforceability in practice, including with respect to the protection of HRDs. Furthermore, the NAP’s indicators are largely quantitative and include vague and overly broad commitments to review or improve relevant laws and mechanisms to ensure measures to protect HRDs and prevent SLAPPs. The absence of meaningful qualitative indicators hinders proper evaluation of its effectiveness. .
^{vii}
8. While the NAP WPS, launched in December 2025, states that mechanisms should be expanded to support HRDs working on conflict-related issues, no tangible progress has been made to date in operationalizing these mechanisms.

B. Killings and attempted killings of HRDs

9. The lives of HRDs are also at risk because of their defence of human rights. On 25 June 2024, Roning Dolah, an anti-torture HRD in the southern border provinces^{viii} who volunteered with the Duayjai Group in support of victims of torture and other ill-treatment, was murdered at his residence by two undercover assailants, just one day before the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.^{ix}
10. Following the incident, the authorities’ investigation was called into question. Discrepancies arose regarding the number of bullet cartridges recovered: the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Region 4 Forward Command reported eight, while family members present at the scene reported finding 28 bullet cartridges. Some bullets cited by the authorities also did not correspond to the gun model associated with the cartridges recorded by the family. To date, the family has received no updates on the criminal investigation into Roning Dolah’s death. Apart from an initial ISOC statement issued two days after the incident—which linked two casings to seven security incidents between 2015 and 2019,^x suggesting possible insurgent involvement—no further information has been provided to the family or the public. The UN Committee against Torture also expressed concern over the killing in its 2024 concluding observations on Thailand’s second periodic report.^{xi}

11. This incident was not the sole attack against HRDs in the region. On 20 March 2026, Kamonsak Leewamoh, a Prachachart Party Member of Parliament and a human rights lawyer affiliated with the Muslim Attorney Center in Narathiwat province, who represents clients in security-related cases, was the target of an attempted assassination. Although he was unharmed, his driver and a police escort were seriously injured.^{xii} Investigations later revealed that the vehicle used in the attack belonged to ISOC, had been dismantled for parts, and abandoned in a junkyard after it was reported missing following a request by an ISOC officer to use it. Three suspects have reportedly been arrested to date, with no further progress announced.^{xiii}

C. Lack of progress in uncovering the fate and whereabouts of HRDs who allegedly disappeared

12. Following the third UPR cycle in 2021, Thailand made progress by enacting the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act on 22 February 2023, thereby partially implementing recommendations it had supported.^{xiv} However, Thailand has fallen short in fulfilling other aspects of those recommendations, particularly with respect to investigating and prosecuting all alleged cases,^{xv} especially those involving HRDs who are victims of enforced disappearance.

13. For example, prominent lawyer and HRD, Somchai Neelapaijit, was allegedly abducted by five police officers in central Bangkok in 2004. Eyewitnesses reported that a group of men forced him into a car on a busy street. Following the acquittal of all five accused officers on 29 December 2015, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) informed Somchai's wife, Angkhana Neelapaijit, on 5 October 2016, that after more than 11 years of investigation, the case would be closed due to the inability to identify any perpetrators. To date, his fate and whereabouts remain unknown, and no one has been held accountable.^{xvi}

14. Similarly, in the case of Karen human rights defender Pholachi ("Billy") Rakcharoen, who was last seen on 17 April 2014 in the custody of Kaeng Krachan National Park officials, the DSI located bone fragments on 12 September 2019 likely belonging to him; however, justice has yet to be served. On 28 September 2023, Thailand's Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases acquitted four Kaeng Krachan National Park officials of murder-related charges, including premeditated murder and concealing the body. Only the former chief of Kaeng Krachan National Park was convicted of malfeasance in office for failing to hand Billy over to the authorities and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The Court concluded that there was insufficient evidence that the park officials had orchestrated the killing, while expressing doubts that Billy had been released as claimed. Although DNA tests indicated a maternal link between the bone fragments and Billy's mother, the court held that this was insufficient to confirm they were his.^{xvii} The case remains under appeal by both the public prosecutor and Billy's family.

15. In addition, in the case of Den Kamlae, a land rights HRD who disappeared on 16 April 2016 while hunting, there has been little progress in determining his fate. In March 2017, a partial skull was discovered in the forest where he disappeared, with DNA analysis indicating a high probability that it belonged to him. While authorities reportedly initiated an investigation, progress has been limited. Forensic examination could not definitively establish the cause of death, and the DSI considered that the skull damage had likely occurred postmortem. However, an independent expert consulted by the family suggested that the damage could have resulted from impact with a sharp object, either before or after death. Despite this, no progress has been made in sending the remains for further examination by an independent forensic pathologist, as requested by the family.

16. In addition to the above cases, between 1980 and May 2024, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances recorded and transmitted 94 cases of alleged enforced disappearances to Thailand. Currently, 77 of these cases, several of which involve HRDs, remain unresolved, with almost no progress reported to the public.

D. Extraterritorial “abduction” of HRDs and political activists (transnational repression)

17. Additionally, in the past decade, another trend has emerged in which exiled political activists and HRDs from Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam have disappeared abroad, and their fate and whereabouts could not be established. In some cases, they were later found in detention facilities in their home countries. As noted by several UN Special Procedures, “these cases appear to point to a pattern of countries in the region coordinating or acquiescing to the extraterritorial abduction of political activists who have fled abroad, leading to enforced disappearances.”^{xviii}

Disappearances of Thai HRDs Abroad

18. In 2020, a number of UN Special Procedures, in their communication to Thailand, identified several cases of Thai HRDs and political activists who disappeared or were abducted in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam, including Wanchalearm Satsaksit, Siam Theerawut, Surachai Danwattananusorn, Chatchan Bubphawan, Kraidej Luelert, and Itthipol Sukpan.^{xix}

19. On 10 June 2024, the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) submitted a report to the Ministry of Justice concerning the disappearance of nine self-exiled Thai political activists between 2017 and 2021 in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. These include Ittipon Sukpaen, Wuthipong Kochathamakun, Surachai Danwattananusorn, Chucheep Chiwasut, Kritsana Thapthai, Siam Theerawut, Wanchalearm Satsaksit, Chatcharn Buppawan, and Kraidej Luelert, the latter two of whom were found dead in late 2018, their bodies encased in concrete along the Mekong River. The NHRCT found that authorities had been negligent in pursuing these cases and that no progress had been made in prosecuting those responsible, giving rise to concern of possible State involvement.^{xx}

20. While some steps have been taken to investigate such cases—including the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Following and Examining Cases of Enforced Disappearance in Other Countries under the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act on 30 August 2024^{xxi}—little progress has been reported. Instead, in several cases, victims’ families have reportedly been informed that investigations were discontinued due to insufficient evidence of involvement by Thai public officials or an inability to establish such involvement.

Disappearances of Non-Thai HRDs in Thailand

21. Regarding non-Thai nationals who have disappeared in Thailand, identified cases by the UN Special Rapporteurs include Od Sayavong, a Lao PDR national, human rights defender, and former member of “Free Lao”; and Truong Duy Nhat, a Vietnamese blogger, journalist, and HRD, who was allegedly abducted in Bangkok and forcibly returned to Viet Nam in February 2019, where he was later convicted and sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for “abusing his position and power while on duty”. These cases also include the more recent alleged abduction of journalist and HRD Duong Van Thai in 2023, while living in exile in Thailand. He was allegedly abducted in Bangkok by Vietnamese personnel and forcibly returned to Viet Nam, where authorities later confirmed that he was in custody, and who was subsequently sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment in October 2024.^{xxii}

E. Deportation of non-Thai HRDs

22. Despite guarantees under the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act that no person shall be expelled, deported, or extradited to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that they would be in danger of torture, ill-treatment, or enforced disappearance, a number of HRDs continue to be forcibly returned. This practice violates domestic law, the principle of *non-refoulement*, and Thailand's obligations under international human rights law, including the ICCPR and the Convention against Torture.
23. For example, Thailand granted Vietnam's request for the extradition of Y Quynh Bdap, a member of the Montagnard ethnic minority and a UNHCR-recognized refugee. He was being sought to serve a 10-year prison sentence on "terrorism" charges imposed *in absentia* in proceedings criticized by several UN human rights experts as failing to meet international fair trial standards. Despite substantial evidence that he would face a real risk of torture or ill-treatment in Vietnam,^{xxiii} his extradition was approved by a Thai court in November 2025, which found insufficient evidence to establish such risk or a risk of enforced disappearance.^{xxiv} He was extradited a few days later to Vietnam, where he faces a decade in prison.^{xxv}
24. Another non-Thai HRD currently at risk of forced return is Le Chi Thanh, a prominent Vietnamese anti-corruption activist and former police officer who uses social media to expose police corruption. He was arrested in Bangkok on 6 March 2026. According to several civil society organizations, his arrest followed the cancellation of his passport by Vietnamese authorities, rendering his Thai visa invalid. He is currently detained at Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok while appealing the revocation of his visa and his deportation order.^{xxvi}

F. Other Forms of Harassment against HRDs

25. Other forms of harassment against HRDs have also been reported. For example, in the southern border provinces, several members of civil society organizations have experienced "visits" from security officers at their homes or offices, or have been "invited for discussions" at military camps to inquire about their activities.^{xxvii}
26. Such visits also create a chilling effect on HRDs and others within their networks. One example recorded by Duayjai Group involved the coordinator of the Guarding the Patani River Network. A few days after the Network submitted a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and the then Deputy Prime Minister to protest against the Krong Pinang Watergate project,^{xxviii} three truckloads of rangers visited his home in November 2025. Although he was not present at the time, the visit generated fear among others in the network, discouraging them from speaking out.
27. In addition, in northern Thailand, CPCRC has documented a pattern of "visits" by companies, sometimes accompanied by authorities, aimed at "creating understanding" or persuading communities, including through offers of compensation, in the context of disputes over the establishment of mining projects. These practices have particularly affected Karen indigenous communities and other local residents who opposed mining developments, leaving them feeling insecure. Examples include the planned barite mining project in Doi Tao, Chiang Mai, and the proposed fluorite mining project in Mae La Noi, Mae Hong Son.^{xxix}

G. Online smear campaigns and spyware attacks against HRDs

Online smear campaigns

28. In recent years, many attacks on HRDs have also occurred online, often attributed to so-called information operations (IO), in which the government is alleged to sponsor disinformation, harassment, and smear campaigns targeting dissenting

voices. This is reportedly carried out through the creation of social media accounts or websites that disseminate content critical of HRDs, with the aim of discrediting their legitimacy and reputation, as well as that of civil society organizations.

29. During a parliamentary debate on 25 February 2020, an opposition member presented evidence alleging that the military and the Thai government sponsored social media accounts and websites targeting HRDs, political activists, opposition politicians, and other public figures. The evidence included ISOC documents detailing its annual budget request, which reportedly supported a website, *pulony.blogspot.com*. The site regularly published content attacking women HRDs working on human rights concerns in the southern border provinces, including those supporting victims of torture and enforced disappearances, such as Angkhana Neelapaijit, Pornpen Khongkachonkiet, and Anchana Heemmina.^{xxx}
30. Following these revelations, Angkhana Neelapaijit and Anchana Heemmina filed a civil lawsuit in November 2020 against the Office of the Prime Minister and the Royal Thai Army before the Bangkok Civil Court, seeking damages under the Act on the Liability for Wrongful Acts of Officials (1996). On 16 February 2023, the Court dismissed the case, although it acknowledged that the website had disseminated harmful misinformation. The Court found insufficient evidence to directly link the defendants to the website. An appeal remains pending before the Appeal Court.^{xxxi}

Spyware attacks

31. In addition, the notorious Pegasus spyware^{xxxii} has reportedly been detected on the mobile phones of dozens of HRDs and activists. A 2022 investigation identified at least 30 individuals whose mobile phones were targeted or infected, including leaders of pro-democracy protests, academics, and HRDs who had publicly criticized the government. Technical analysis indicated that infections occurred between 2020 and 2021.^{xxxiii} One affected activist filed a civil case against the NSO Group, the developer of Pegasus spyware, alleging that the company facilitated violations of his constitutional rights, including the right to privacy. In 2024, a Thai Court dismissed the case—reportedly the first ruling globally involving the NSO Group—citing insufficient evidence that the device in question had been infected and a lack of detailed forensic findings.^{xxxiv}
32. In 2024, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern regarding the alleged use of Pegasus spyware by State actors to keep under surveillance and harass HRDs, including through online smear campaigns, as well as about the lack of progress in investigating these allegations.^{xxxv}

H. Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

33. The abuse of judicial proceedings through Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs)—defined as lawsuits initiated with the primary purpose of curtailing or deterring public criticism or opposition—continues to be used against HRDs. These lawsuits have a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression and other human rights that Thailand is obligated to protect under international human rights law, including the ICCPR. These rights include, *inter alia*, freedom of opinion and expression (article 19, ICCPR), freedom of peaceful assembly (article 21, ICCPR), freedom of association (article 22, ICCPR), and the right to participate in public affairs (article 25, ICCPR).
34. HRDs are among the groups most affected by SLAPPs, alongside local communities affected by development projects, journalists and academics. SLAPPs cases against HRDs and others are often brought under laws that are not compliant with international human rights law and standards, including criminal defamation (sections 326–328 of the Criminal Code), sedition-like offences (section 116 of the

Criminal Code), regulations under the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005), the Computer-Related Crimes Act B.E. 2560 (2017), and other legal provisions, such as those against trespassing.^{xxxvi}

Root Causes of SLAPPs – Non-Human Rights-Compliant Laws

35. Criminal defamation offences are among the most frequently used legal provisions in SLAPP cases. For example, UNDP recorded that, of 109 SLAPP cases (involving 122 charges) brought by businesses between 1997 and 2022, 52 charges (43 per cent) relied on criminal defamation under sections 326–328^{xxxvii} of the Criminal Code.^{xxxviii}
36. With respect to this, the Human Rights Committee has clarified that criminal penalties are generally not appropriate for defamation and that imprisonment for “defamation offences” is always a disproportionate sanction and a violation of article 19 of the ICCPR.^{xxxix} In 2017, the UN Human Rights Committee called on Thailand to consider decriminalizing defamation.^{xl} In 2024, Thailand noted most recommendations from the third UPR cycle calling for amendments to provisions such as section 116 (sedition) and sections 326–328 (criminal defamation),^{xli} and only supported a recommendation to “consider revising” legislation on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to align it with international human rights law and standards.^{xlii}
37. Despite efforts by the Ministry of Justice and the People’s Party to propose amendments to criminal defamation provisions, the draft law remains at a preliminary stage. As currently proposed, it would not decriminalize defamation but would instead introduce a “public interest” defence, or, in some proposals, replace imprisonment with fines, while retaining the criminal law offence.

Recent SLAPP Examples

HRDs in southern border provinces

38. Several recent cases illustrate the continued use of SLAPPs against HRDs. In Thailand’s southern border provinces, Anchana Heemmina, Director of the Duayjai Group, received a police summons on 13 September 2024 after being charged by the Royal Thai Navy under section 14 of the Computer-Related Crimes Act. The case arose from a Facebook post she made on 8 May 2024 questioning whether a complaint could be filed if the military had not paid for water used from a mosque. The case against her was eventually dismissed in November 2025.
39. Another example is the case of Abdul Afir Seng, a volunteer journalist with Wartani and a Malay Muslim youth activist from Pattani. He was detained for seven days without charge or a court warrant under Martial Law and subsequently prosecuted under section 116 of the Criminal Code and the Computer-Related Crimes Act after sharing a post regarding an alleged extrajudicial killing. Authorities alleged he reported incorrect casualty figures and used language that could cause “social polarization”.^{xliii} On 4 March 2026, the Pattani Provincial Court convicted him and sentenced him to two years and four months’ imprisonment.^{xliv} The case is currently under appeal.
40. Another recent example is the 2025 indictment of nine Malay Muslim HRDs and student activists under sections 116 (sedition), 209 (membership in a secret society^{xlv}), and 210 (conspiracy) of the Criminal Code, as well as the under the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations. The charges stem from their involvement in organizing the Melayu Raya cultural gathering, which attracted over 10,000 participants on 4 May 2022. Authorities alleged that they engaged in “seditious conduct” by using language to incite youth to oppose the

government. The trial commenced in mid-2025 and remains pending before the Pattani Provincial Court.^{xlvi}

41. SLAPPs also continue in the context of reprisals against communities resisting industrial projects and HRDs speaking out against alleged corporate misconduct. One example concerns HRD Witoon Lianchamroon, Secretary-General of the BioThai Foundation, who faced legal action after disseminating information on the alleged environmental impacts of blackchin tilapia, an invasive species that threatens aquatic biodiversity and ecosystem balance, potentially undermining the right to a healthy environment. The case is reportedly linked to a Thailand-based agribusiness company that initiated legal action against him.^{xlvii} The trial began in October 2025.
42. Another case concerns a lawsuit arising from opposition to a waste-to-energy project in Phan district, Chiang Rai province. Villagers organized a public hearing and expressed opposition through a protest song. A video of the event, depicting a villager singing, uploaded in October 2025, led to both the singer and uploader being sued for criminal defamation by a Subdistrict Administrative Organization executive in January 2026. Although the court dismissed the case at the preliminary hearing stage,^{xlviii} the proceedings nonetheless posed legal risks, time burdens, and pressure against those who were sued.

Emerging SLAPP Trends

43. Moreover, a concerning emerging trend is the significant increase in SLAPP cases initiated by politicians, particularly around periods of general elections. This trend appears to have a chilling effect on the public's willingness to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and to participate in public affairs, both of which are guaranteed by the ICCPR. For example, Thammanat Prompao, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, stated in January 2026 that more than 270 defamation complaints had been filed with the police in relation to online comments critical of him, particularly those posted around October 2025. Over 100 of these cases involved individuals commenting on news articles, as well as journalists and political opponents, raising renewed concerns about the use of defamation laws to target critics. These developments also occurred in the context of the general elections scheduled for early February 2025.^{xlix}
44. Another example concerns lawsuits brought by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Suchart Chomklin, between 2025 and 2026 against at least two HRDs, as well as journalists, political opponents, and investigators. These cases were linked to reporting and investigations into alleged bribery in a labour trafficking case and a corruption scandal in which he was allegedly involved while serving as Labour Minister. According to his legal team, the reporting misled the public and damaged his reputation. The cases relied on criminal defamation provisions and the Computer-Related Crimes Act.^l
45. Another alarming practice is the use of Thailand's judicial system to pursue cases linked to foreign governments. For example, Murray Hunter, an Australian journalist residing in Thailand, was prosecuted for criminal defamation in Thailand in connection with four articles published on the online application Substack^{li} between 13 and 29 April 2024, which allegedly defamed the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). He was arrested on 29 September 2025 at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. Although the case was eventually resolved through a mediation process, it raises concerns that foreign governments may use Thailand's judicial system to silence critics present on Thai territory.^{lii}

Shortcomings in anti-SLAPP Provisions

46. While some steps have been taken by the Thai government to address the above concerns, these measures remain inadequate.

Sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code

47. These measures include sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code, enacted in 2019, which allow courts to dismiss certain SLAPP lawsuits or similar forms of harassment through legal proceedings. Section 161/1 allows courts to dismiss and bar the re-filing of cases brought in bad faith or intended to harass or gain undue advantage. Section 165/2 enables defendants, at the preliminary hearing, to present and challenge evidence demonstrating that a case lacks merit.
48. However, the continued legal harassment of HRDs and others over the past year indicates that these provisions may be inadequate in substance or inadequately implemented. With respect to section 161/1, shortcomings as identified by the ICJ include: the absence of a clear definition of “bad faith” or explicit protection for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms; its limitation to private criminal complaints, excluding civil cases and public prosecutions; the broad discretion afforded to courts, including the possibility of acting *suo motu*; and the lack of an explicit guarantee of the right to appeal or judicial review.^{liii} Several of these limitations have also been acknowledged in Thailand’s Second National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (2023–2027).^{liv}
49. Similarly, article 165/2 is limited in scope, as it applies only to criminal cases initiated by private complainants and does not extend to civil cases or criminal cases brought by public prosecutors, where preliminary hearings are not guaranteed.^{lv}
50. In addition, while the ICJ has received information from the Court of Justice indicating that these provisions have been applied in some cases, including criminal defamation cases, concerns remain regarding their effectiveness, as the organizations, through their case monitoring, have not observed any SLAPP cases being struck out as a result of courts exercising their powers, particularly under section 161/1. Similarly, the Clooney Foundation for Justice’s TrialWatch project analysed 36 criminal defamation cases with clear SLAPP characteristics in 2024 and found that, although section 161/1 was invoked in 32 per cent of eligible cases, no cases were dismissed on that basis, and courts failed to respond to such petitions in all applicable cases.^{lvi}

Section 21 of the Public Prosecution Organ and Public Prosecutors Act

51. While articles 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code are applicable only to criminal cases filed by a private complainant, the Public Prosecutors Act applies to criminal cases filed by a public prosecutor.
52. Section 21 of the Public Prosecution Organ and Public Prosecutors Act B.E. 2553 (2010) is often cited as a potential safeguard against SLAPPs. It provides that, where a public prosecutor determines that a prosecution would not serve the public interest, would affect national security, or would impair a significant State interest, the matter shall be referred to the Attorney-General, who may halt the prosecution.
53. In practice, however, this provision is difficult and time-consuming to apply, as only the Attorney-General has the authority to issue a non-prosecution order. While internal guidelines exist to guide prosecutors in assessing the public interest—including factors such as the background of the accused, reasons for the alleged offence, expressions of remorse, the views of victims, State interests, and the broadly defined concept of “public morals”^{lvii}—these criteria remain vague and inconsistently applied.

54. In addition, ICJ, CPRC and Duayjai Group consider that, rather than relying solely on section 21, public prosecutors should exercise their ordinary prosecutorial discretion to dismiss SLAPP cases at an early stage, in order to minimize their adverse effects. To date, however, this does not consistently occur in practice.

Organic Act on Anti-Corruption

55. On 5 March 2025, Thailand's Parliament adopted amendments to the Organic Act on Anti-Corruption to provide protection for individuals who, in good faith, provide information, testimony, or opinions to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). Such individuals are shielded from civil, criminal, and disciplinary liability, representing a positive step in protecting individuals from SLAPPs. However, this protection is limited to cases involving the NACC and does not address the broader misuse of judicial processes to silence public criticism and civic engagement protected under international human rights law and Thailand's Constitution.^{lviii}

III. Recommendations

56. In light of the above concerns, the ICJ, CPRC, and Duayjai Group call upon the Human Rights Council and the UPR Working Group to recommend that the Government of Thailand:

In relation to the lack of an adequate HRDs protection framework

- Amend the NAP, particularly its indicators, to ensure that they constitute meaningful qualitative indicators that allow for proper evaluation of its effectiveness;
- Enact legislation to give legal force to the action points under the NAP and/or adopt policies that legally recognize the role of HRDs and ensure a safe and enabling environment for them to carry out their work in defence of the public interest;
- Operationalize institutional mechanisms, with clear mandates, procedures, and resources, to provide protection, rehabilitation, and remedies for HRDs, including women HRDs and those working on conflict-related issues, in line with the NAP WPS;

In relation to the killings and attempted killings of HRDs

- Conduct prompt, thorough, impartial, independent, effective, and transparent investigations into the killing of anti-torture HRD Roning Dolah and the attempted assassination of MP and human rights lawyer Kamonsak Leewamoh, and any other such incidents;

In relation to enforced disappearances and transnational repression

- Ensure prompt, thorough, effective, impartial, independent, and transparent investigations to establish the fate and whereabouts of HRDs who are victims of enforced disappearance, including cases identified above and unresolved cases transmitted by the WGIED, with a view to identifying perpetrators, and ensuring accountability, including under the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act;
- Take immediate measures to end the pattern of coordinating or acquiescing to the extraterritorial abduction of political activists who have fled to Thailand or abroad, leading to enforced disappearances;

In relation to the deportation of non-Thai HRDs

- Ensure that the implementation of the Extradition Act and the Immigration Act fully complies with section 13 of the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act, and Thailand’s international human rights law obligations, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, and that this obligation—particularly its absolute nature—be clearly communicated and strictly applied by all relevant authorities, including in the context of extradition laws and procedures;

In relation to harassments against HRDs

- End all forms of harassment and intimidation against HRDs, including coercive “visits” and summons to military facilities by State or non-State actors;

In relation to online attacks and surveillance

- Address disinformation campaigns targeting HRDs, end the use of spyware such as Pegasus, and ensure prompt, independent, and effective investigations into such practices;

In relation to SLAPPs

- Repeal the criminal defamation provisions or substantially amend laws that criminalize or unduly restrict the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including sections 116 and 326–328 of the Criminal Code and section 14 of the Computer-Related Crimes Act;
- Amend existing legal safeguards, including sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code and section 21 of the Public Prosecutors Act, by ensuring explicit protection for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as clear recognition of SLAPP cases that may warrant dismissal; or adopt comprehensive anti-SLAPP legislation to enable the early dismissal of such cases with full due process guarantees, in a manner consistent with Thailand’s international human rights obligations.

ENDNOTES

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- ^{vii} See also: ICJ, 'Thailand: Government and companies must effectively implement commitments under the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights', 20 September 2022, available at: <https://www.icj.org/thailand-commitments-on-business-and-human-rights/>
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- ^{xi} UN Committee Against Torture, 'Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Thailand', UN Doc CAT/C/THA/CO/2, 9 December 2024, paras 40 and 41, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4068751?v=pdf>
- ^{xii} Bangkok Post, '2 injured, southern human rights MP unharmed in ambush', 20 March 2026, available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/3220675/2-injured-southern-human-rights-mp-unharmed-in-ambush>
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- ^{xv} 2021 UPR Report, paras. 51.28
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- ^{xviii} Mandates of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 'AL THA 8/2020,' 11 December 2020, available at: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?qId=25646> ('AL THA 8/2020')
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- ^{xxii} The UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concern that Duong Van Thai's reported enforced disappearance and rendition may have been directly linked to his legitimate work as an independent journalist and HRD. They further noted that such abduction and forced repatriation may place Thailand in violation of the principle of non-refoulement and may constitute an arbitrary

deprivation of liberty, a violation of the right to security of person under the ICCPR, and an enforced disappearance. See: Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 'AL THA 6/2024', 14 June 2024, available at:

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