THAILAND UPR IV 2026
UPR FACTSHEET



CIVIC SPACE UNDER SIEGE IN THAILAND

Violations of Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly, SLAPPs and Attacks on Human Rights Defenders

Brief Assessment of the Implementation of the 3rd Cycle UPR Recommendations

Civic space in Thailand remains severely restricted by the continued criminalisation of political expression and peaceful assembly, prolonged proceedings and detention, and the weaponisation of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) against human rights defenders, journalists, community leaders and others speaking on matters of public interest. In May 2026, Thailand was reported having the highest number of SLAPP cases filed annually among ASEAN countries. Children and youth remain particularly exposed to prosecution and other restrictions when exercising their rights to expression and peaceful assembly.

During its 3rd UPR cycle, Thailand received **39 recommendations relevant to the civic space issues** addressed in this factsheet, of which it supported 17 and noted 22. In its final response, Thailand supported 11 of 18 recommendations concerning freedom of expression and eight of 16 concerning freedom of peaceful assembly. It noted all 12 recommendations concerning Section 112 of the Criminal Code, while supporting Belgium's recommendation to enact legal protection against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Recommendations also addressed civil society space, protection of human rights defenders, and investigations into harassment and attacks against them. These commitments have not translated into effective protection: restrictive laws continue to be applied against peaceful civic and political activity, while safeguards against abusive litigation remain narrow and ineffective.

293 people charged under Section 112 across **322** cases
18 July 2020 - 31 August 2026

20+ minors charged
youngest was **14 years old**

No. 1 in ASEAN
for SLAPP cases filed annually
as of May 2026

REALITIES ON THE GROUND

Challenges | **Case, Facts, and Comments**

Challenge 1: Weaponisation of Lèse-Majesté, Sedition, Computer Crimes Act and Defamation Laws to Silence Political Speech

The Thai Government has continued to weaponise a series of repressive laws to criminalise political speech, in clear violation of Article 19 of the ICCPR and General Comment No. 34. None of the 3rd cycle UPR recommendations calling for review, amendment or repeal of these laws has been implemented. The laws have instead been applied to a larger cohort of persons, including minors, since 2020.

Advocacy for reform of Section 112 has itself resulted in a prison sentence. On 20 February 2026, Pimsiri "Mook" Petchnamrob was sentenced to two years and eight months' imprisonment without suspension for a speech delivered at a peaceful pro-democracy assembly in November 2020. She was granted bail and is not currently imprisoned. In its reasoning, the Court treated her call to amend Section 112, made by reference to recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, as falling outside legitimate criticism. UN experts subsequently raised concern that her conviction penalised the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression and assembly.

This UPR Factsheet was prepared by **Manushya Foundation, GIRLxGIRL, Young Pride Foundation, Mokeluang Rimnam, Buriram Plod-Aek, Tamtang Foundation, Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR and UN Mechanisms, Muslim Attorney Centre Foundation, Civil Society Assembly for Peace, Prof. Haji Sulong Abdulqadir Tohmeena Foundation, Jaringan Mangsa Dari Undang-Undang Darurat (JASAD), Tanah Kita Foundation, The HOOMAN, The Patani, Patani Human Rights Organisation**

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Section 112 (lèse-majesté) continues to carry 3 to 15 years per count and is applied to children

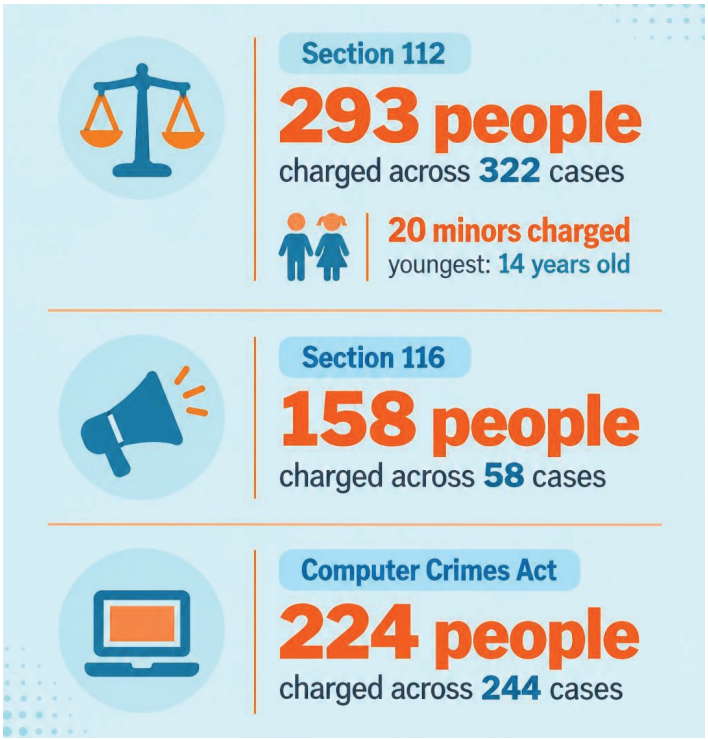
Section 112 provides no exemption or mitigation for offenders who are children. Between 18 July 2020 and 31 August 2026, at least 293 individuals were charged under Section 112 across 322 cases. Since November 2020, at least 20 individuals charged under Section 112 have been minors, the youngest being 14 years old at the time of charge.

Section 116 (sedition) is used against a broad range of political activity

Between 18 July 2020 and 31 August 2026, at least 158 individuals were charged under Section 116 across 58 cases. Sedition has been used against organisers of cultural gatherings, including nine persons prosecuted after the Melayu Raya cultural gathering in Pattani on 4 May 2022, and against protest organisers in southern and northern Thailand alike.

The Computer Crimes Act is used to extend criminalisation to online speech

Between 18 July 2020 and 31 August 2026, at least 224 individuals were charged under the Computer Crimes Act across 244 cases. Article 14 in particular has been applied to online criticism of the government and the monarchy, and has been used in combination with Section 112 and Section 116 to compound charges against individual defendants.



Defamation as a criminal offence continues to enable SLAPPs against journalists, HRDs and communities

Criminal defamation under Sections 326 to 333 of the Criminal Code has not been repealed, despite the 3rd cycle recommendation to do so. Sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which provide narrow judicial screening of SLAPPs, remain inconsistently applied and no comprehensive statistics on their use have been published.

Repeated Section 112 prosecutions can turn political expression into decades of prison sentences. Human rights lawyer Arnon Nampa has faced 14 Section 112 cases arising largely from speeches delivered during the 2020-2021 pro-democracy protests. By July 2026, he had received 11 convictions, with cumulative prison sentences reaching 31 years, 9 months and 20 days, and had remained continuously detained since 26 September 2023 and had repeatedly been denied bail. In 2024, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary and called for his immediate release and reparations

Pai remains detained because of a pending Section 112 charge. Jatupat "Pai" Boonpattararaksa has been continuously detained since 3 September 2025 in connection with proceedings arising from his political speeches and protests. In the case concerning the September 2020 protest, the court terminated other charges under the **Act on Promoting a Peaceful Society B.E. 2569 (2026)**, but the Section 112 charge remained pending. Although Pai was granted bail in a separate case, he could not be released while detained in this one. On 22 September 2026, the Criminal Court rejected his 11th bail application in the pending case, which had not yet resulted in a judgment.

Section 112 prosecution of feminist defender Tanruthai "Pim" Thanrut. Pim, a queer woman human rights defender with the Mokeluang Rimnam youth group, and Protection Associate at Manushya Foundation, was prosecuted for a speech at the 14 July 2023 "Respect My Vote" assembly calling on legislators to respect the election result. She also described surveillance, arrest warrants and a raid on her family home, during which officers told her parents to make her "be a good girl." On 4 March 2025, the court convicted her under Section 112 and imposed a prison sentence of one year and six months, suspended for two years, alongside probation and community service. She completed her probation requirements in April 2026, and her case is now closed. Her experience shows how prosecution for political expression can be accompanied by gendered intimidation extending to a defender's family.

Section 112 prosecutions have also reached elected representatives.

Rukchanok "Ice" Srinork was sentenced in December 2023 to six years' imprisonment under Section 112 and the Computer Crime Act over two social media posts, including one concerning a company linked to the monarchy and COVID-19 vaccine production. She was granted bail following the judgment.

Chonthicha "Lookkate" Jangrew was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a speech at a peaceful protest in September 2021, in which she called for the release of political prisoners and criticised laws concerning royal powers and property. The Court of Appeal upheld the sentence in September 2025. She was granted bail pending a further appeal.

Piyarat "Toto" Chongthep has faced separate Section 112 prosecutions with different outcomes. In March 2026, the Ubon Ratchathani Provincial Court acquitted him over a 2020 protest speech about royal powers and the military, finding that it expressed opinions on the structure of state power and the origins of the Constitution. On 20 May 2026, in a separate case concerning banners criticising the government's COVID-19 vaccine policy, the Court of Appeal overturned an earlier acquittal and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment under Section 112. He was granted bail pending a Supreme Court appeal.

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REALITIES ON THE GROUND

Challenges | **Case, Facts, and Comments**



Youth activist Netiporn "Bung" Sanesangkhom
Bung was a leading member of the pro-democracy group Thaluwang. She faced Section 112 charges and died in custody on while detained pending trial, following a prolonged hunger strike.

PHOTO: Adirach Toumlamoon (31 October 2021)

Proposing reform of Section 112 has exposed legislators to a possible lifetime political ban. On 9 February 2026, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) concluded that 44 former Move Forward Party MPs had committed a serious ethical violation by jointly proposing a bill to amend Section 112 of the Criminal Code. On 24 April 2026, the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Persons Holding Political Positions accepted the case for consideration. The 44 include 10 serving MPs; if the Court finds against them, they could face a lifetime ban from political office. The proceedings place legislators at risk of losing their political rights for seeking to reform a law through Parliament.

Netiporn "Bung" Sanesangkhom died while detained pending trial. Netiporn, a 28-year-old activist facing Section 112 charges connected to a public opinion poll about royal motorcades, was returned to custody on **26 January 2024** after her bail was revoked. She began a hunger strike to protest her detention and the denial of bail to other political detainees. She died on **14 May 2024**, while still in custody. Her death illustrates the grave consequences that pre-trial detention can have for people prosecuted for political expression and underscores the need to investigate deaths in custody independently and effectively.

Challenge 2: Criminalisation, Violence and Repression of Child and Youth Human Rights Defenders



Children and young people continue to face criminal proceedings and intimidation for exercising their rights to expression and peaceful assembly.

The **Public Assembly Act B.E. 2558 (2015)** and the **Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005)** do not set out specific safeguards for children participating in assemblies.

The **Child Protection Act B.E. 2546 (2003)** does not expressly safeguard children's rights to expression and peaceful assembly. In practice, authorities have invoked child-protection powers to prevent children from joining protests, treating their participation as "at-risk" behaviour rather than an exercise of their rights.

Children have also faced proceedings under **Sections 112 and 116 of the Criminal Code** for political expression. Neither provision contains a child-specific exemption or reduced penalty. While general age-based rules and juvenile justice safeguards apply, bringing children into criminal proceedings for peaceful political expression can itself cause harm and deter them from exercising rights protected by the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

Children and youth report serious barriers to expression, assembly and association. In a peer survey designed by children and young people from 13 groups and organisations across Thailand and conducted from 15 December 2025 to 8 February 2026, 52% of respondents said expressing opinions or advocating for rights was difficult, 61% reported barriers to assembly and association, and 45% said adults had prevented them from expressing views on social or political issues. Among respondents who reported being obstructed, 93% felt that speaking out was difficult or that no one listened, while 60% attributed the restrictions to adults' concerns about consequences for their families or educational institutions. The survey received 63 completed responses with consent, including 51 from child activists and 12 from parents or caregivers.

A child defender detained for 51 days under Section 112. Thanalop "Yok" Phalanchai was 14 years old when she took part in an October 2022 protest and 15 when police arrested her on 28 March 2023 under Section 112 of the Criminal Code. She spent 51 days in pre-trial detention at the Ban Pranee Juvenile Vocational Training Centre for Girls before her release on 18 May 2023. Her prosecution and detention disrupted her education; she subsequently faced barriers to returning to school while continuing to advocate for students' freedom of expression. Yok's case illustrates the harm caused when a child is drawn into criminal proceedings for political expression, engaging Thailand's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the rights to expression, liberty and education.

Detention of a 17-year-old in Narathiwat on 17 February 2026
A 17-year-old was detained at his home in Narathiwat Province on 17 February 2026 by approximately eleven vehicles of security forces, shortly after returning from school, on alleged connection to a bomb attack. The case illustrates the disproportionate use of security force powers against children in the Southern Border Provinces and the failure to apply the principle that deprivation of liberty of children must be a measure of last resort.

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REALITIES ON THE GROUND

Challenges	Case, Facts, and Comments

Child human rights defenders lack specific legal protection. Thailand has no dedicated law protecting human rights defenders, including children and young people who defend rights. In the child-led survey, 69% of respondents called for legislation to protect child human rights defenders, while 66% called for human rights education in school curricula. When asked whom they could turn to for help, 32.35% ranked State and government agencies last. This finding points to a lack of confidence in official protection mechanisms among the children and young people surveyed.

Challenge 3: Violent Repression of Peaceful Assembly, SLAPPs and Continued Denial of Bail

The expiry of emergency measures has not ended the prosecution of peaceful protesters. Bangkok's severe state of emergency was lifted in October 2020, and the nationwide COVID-19 emergency declaration ended in September 2022.

Nevertheless, proceedings arising from protests held under those measures have continued, alongside prosecutions under the Public Assembly Act B.E. 2558 (2015) and other laws. Separately, the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) remains in force in designated districts of the Southern Border Provinces.

Documented excessive force against protesters during 2020-2021 has yet to result in adequate accountability, while repeated denial of bail continues to prolong detention in politically sensitive cases.



Saluai Hantale, Indigenous woman human rights defender from the Urak Lawoi peoples

Saluai has worked for years to defend Chao Lay communities' land and livelihoods while herself facing prolonged litigation linked to a land dispute.

Seven defenders SLAPPed for protesting forest measures affecting Indigenous communities. On 1 April 2025, seven community representatives and defenders joined a peaceful demonstration outside Government House calling for changes to conservation measures affecting forest land rights. They were charged under the Public Assembly Act B.E. 2558 (2015) for allegedly assembling within 50 metres of Government House and reported to police to hear the charges on 26 May 2025. On 4 September 2026, the Dusit District Court ended their case under the Act on Promoting a Peaceful Society B.E. 2569 (2026).

Saluai Hantale and four other Chao Lay defenders prevail after years of SLAPP litigation over ancestral land. Saluai Hantale, an Indigenous Chao Lay woman defender and member of the Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand, faced an eviction lawsuit over land where her family had lived for generations. She described selling her boat to cover the costs of defending the case. By July 2026, the Supreme Court had dismissed the claim against her and four other defenders and ordered the return of appellate court fees. Their victory did not resolve the wider land disputes on Koh Lipe, where Chao Lay communities continue to face litigation, land grabbing, blocked access to traditional fishing grounds, and development that threatens Chao Lay communities' rights, livelihoods, and identity.

No independent investigation of the 2020-2021 violence against protesters. Amnesty International's Crisis Evidence Lab verified 87 videos depicting police violence during the protests and documented officers firing rubber bullets at close range. On 13 August 2021, Tanat "Nat" Thanakitamnuay sustained an injury during a protest that permanently cost him sight in his right eye. In a separate incident on 16 August 2021, three children were shot with live ammunition near Din Daeng Police Station; 15-year-old Warit Somnoi died from his injuries on 28 October 2021. A member of the public was later indicted for Warit's killing, but the proceedings were delayed after police repeatedly failed to provide evidence requested by prosecutors. The documented police violence and failures to protect protesters underscore the need for an independent investigation and accountability.

Activists and human rights lawyers continue to be denied bail in politically sensitive cases. Courts have repeatedly refused temporary release to people prosecuted for political expression or protest, leaving some detained while their trials or appeals remain unresolved. In August 2026, courts denied bail applications for seven political detainees: **Attapon Buapat, Nawat Liangwattana, Jatupat "Pai" Boonpattararaksa and "Fah" Promsorn** in Section 112 cases; **Aekachai Hongkangwan and Suranat Paenprasert** in Section 110 cases; and **"Bank" Nattaphon** in a case concerning the burning of a police vehicle. Repeated bail denials prolong detention and place pressure on defendants seeking to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

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REALITIES ON THE GROUND

Challenges | Case, Facts, and Comments

Challenge 4: Absence of comprehensive anti-SLAPP legislation and ineffective procedural safeguards



Thailand still lacks comprehensive and effective legal protection against SLAPPs. Protection International documented **595 SLAPP cases against women human rights defenders and other defenders between May 2014 and February 2025.**

Thai PBS World reported in May 2026 that Thailand has the highest number of SLAPP cases filed annually among ASEAN countries.

Studies focused on business-related cases show how SLAPPs are used against people raising concerns about corporate conduct. A UNDP study examined 109 cases in Thailand from 1997 to 2022 in the context of business and human rights. In a separate global dataset covering 2015 to 2024, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre recorded 54 cases in Thailand brought or initiated by private actors against defenders raising business-related concerns, one of the highest country totals in that dataset.

Existing safeguards remain fragmented. Sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code provide limited ways to challenge abusive private criminal complaints, while **Section 132 of the Organic Act on Anti-Corruption** protects people who provide information or testimony to the National Anti-Corruption Commission in good faith.

Guidelines issued by the President of the Supreme Court in May 2026 clarify when judges may dismiss bad-faith private criminal complaints, including cases brought in response to public-interest advocacy. The guidelines have limited legal force and do not extend these safeguards to civil claims or prosecutions brought by the State. Comprehensive anti-SLAPP legislation has yet to be enacted.

Human rights defenders, journalists and community leaders continue to face financial, professional and personal costs even when cases are eventually dismissed. Effective protection requires a way to end abusive proceedings early and remedy the harm defendants incur while defending them.

Thailand's existing anti-SLAPP safeguards have failed to stop abusive cases at an early stage. Two provisions added to the Criminal Procedure Code in 2019 offer limited protection. Section 161/1 allows courts to dismiss private criminal complaints filed in bad faith, including complaints intended to harass defendants. Section 165/2 allows defendants to present facts, legal arguments and evidence at a preliminary hearing so the court can decide whether a complaint has sufficient grounds to proceed. Neither provision covers civil lawsuits. Section 161/1 does not apply to prosecutions brought by public prosecutors, and preliminary hearings are not required in those prosecutions, limiting access to Section 165/2. A TrialWatch study published in September 2024 examined 36 criminal defamation cases identified as SLAPPs between 2019 and 2023. Defendants invoked Section 161/1 in 32% of eligible cases, yet none was dismissed on that basis. Defendants can therefore remain burdened by lengthy proceedings despite safeguards intended to stop abusive cases early.

The May 2026 judicial guidance leaves major anti-SLAPP gaps unresolved. Recommendations issued by the President of the Supreme Court clarify factors judges may consider when deciding whether a private criminal complaint was filed in bad faith, including whether it targets advocacy on matters of public interest. They also clarify when courts may dismiss such a complaint early under Section 161/1 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The guidance does not have the force of legislation and remains tied to Section 161/1. It therefore does not extend protection to civil lawsuits or criminal prosecutions brought by public prosecutors.

The proposed anti-SLAPP reform does not address the full range of laws weaponised against human rights defenders. The Ministry of Justice's draft proposes procedures to screen abusive civil and criminal cases, but its substantive reforms focus on defamation. In practice, defenders are also SLAPPed through Sections 110, 112, 116, 209 and 210 of the Criminal Code, the Computer Crime Act, the Public Assembly Act B.E. 2558 (2015) and the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) when these provisions are used to silence their advocacy or subject them to judicial harassment. Effective anti-SLAPP legislation must protect defenders across the full range of laws used against them and enable abusive proceedings to be ended early. Furthermore, the March-April 2025 consultation on the draft was dominated by government officials, who accounted for approximately 92% of respondents, while civil society organisations accounted for 2.60%.

The scale of abusive litigation demonstrates the limits of the existing framework. Between May 2014 and February 2025, 595 SLAPP cases involving women and human rights defenders were documented across 13 offence categories, with at least two defenders facing judicial harassment through the legal system each month. The persistence and scale of these cases demonstrate that piecemeal procedural safeguards have failed to provide effective protection against SLAPPs.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. On Challenge 1: Weaponisation of Lèse-Majesté, Sedition, Computer Crimes and Defamation Laws

1.1	Amend or repeal Section 112 of the Criminal Code to bring it in line with Article 19 of the ICCPR and General Comment No. 34, including by removing custodial penalties, allowing truth as a defence, prohibiting the filing of complaints by third parties, and providing an explicit exemption or mitigation for offenders who are children, in line with the 3rd cycle recommendations from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Spain and the United States.
1.2	Amend or repeal Sections 110 and 116 of the Criminal Code and Article 14 of the Computer Crimes Act to remove overbroad and vague language that permits arbitrary interpretation by officials, and to narrow the definition of the offences in line with international human rights law.
1.3	Decriminalise defamation by repealing Sections 326 to 333 of the Criminal Code.
1.4	Release unconditionally and immediately all persons detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, drop all pending prosecutions, and provide effective remedy and compensation including in the case of Netiporn "Bung" Sanesangkhom and other persons who died or suffered irreversible harm in pre-trial detention.

2. On Challenge 2: Criminalisation, Violence and Repression of Child and Youth Human Rights Defenders

2.1	Enact legislation protecting human rights defenders, with specific provision for children and youth, including penalties for harassment, intimidation and reprisals, in line with the 3rd cycle recommendation supported by the United Kingdom.
2.2	Amend the Public Assembly Act, the Emergency Decree, the Internal Security Act, the Martial Law Act and the Child Protection Act to explicitly recognise and safeguard children's rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, in line with Articles 12, 13 and 15 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2.3	Provide an explicit exemption or mitigation for child offenders under Sections 112 and 116 of the Criminal Code, and guarantee that no child is prosecuted, detained or otherwise sanctioned for the peaceful exercise of their rights, online or offline.
2.4	Make human rights education, including on the rights to peaceful assembly, association, participation and non-discrimination, compulsory at all levels of compulsory education within two years, and provide mandatory recurring human rights training on children's rights to teachers, security agencies and law enforcement officials, with annual public assessment.
2.5	End the disproportionate use of security force powers against children in the Southern Border Provinces, including through immediate review, amendment or repeal of the Martial Law Act, the Emergency Decree and the Internal Security Act within three years.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

3. On Challenge 3: Violent Repression of Peaceful Assembly, SLAPPs and Denial of Bail

3.1 Amend the 2015 Public Assembly Act to bring it in line with Article 21 of the ICCPR and Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 37, refrain from invoking Emergency Decree machinery as a substitute for peacetime regulation of assemblies, and end the routine SLAPPing of Indigenous, environmental and human rights defenders under the Public Assembly Act.

3.2 Establish independent, transparent and time-bound investigations into all instances of lethal or excessive force used against protesters, in particular during the 2020-2021 pro-democracy protests, and prosecute those responsible.

3.3 End the routine denial of bail in politically sensitive cases, reserve pre-trial detention for cases meeting the strict necessity and proportionality tests set out in Article 9 of the ICCPR, and provide adequate healthcare to persons in detention consistent with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

4. On Challenge 4: Absence of comprehensive anti-SLAPP legislation and ineffective procedural safeguards

4.1 In line with the 3rd cycle UPR recommendation made by Belgium, enact comprehensive, gender-sensitive, standalone anti-SLAPP legislation that covers abusive civil and criminal proceedings, enables their early dismissal, and provides legal assistance, recovery of costs and effective remedies to persons targeted for public-interest participation

4.2 In line with the CEDAW Committee's 2025 concluding observations, ensure that women human rights defenders can exercise their rights to expression, peaceful assembly and association without criminal charges or reprisals for their work. Investigate harassment and intimidation against them, and provide accessible legal assistance, effective remedies and reparations, including to Indigenous women and women defending environmental, labour and community rights.

4.3 Amend Sections 161/1 and 165/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code to establish clear criteria and time limits for identifying and dismissing abusive complaints at the earliest stage, require courts to give reasoned decisions on anti-SLAPP applications, and extend effective screening to prosecutions brought by public prosecutors. Establish equivalent early-dismissal protection in civil proceedings.

4.4 Revise the Ministry of Justice's draft anti-SLAPP legislation through meaningful consultation with women human rights defenders, journalists and affected communities. Ensure its protections apply when Sections 110, 112, 116, 209 or 210 of the Criminal Code, the Computer Crime Act, the Public Assembly Act B.E. 2558 (2015), the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) or other provisions are used to silence human rights work, rather than concentrating substantive reform on defamation.

SCAN HERE

Scan to access the **Joint UPR submission on Digital Rights** to learn more about the arsenal of laws used to silence defenders

SCAN HERE

Scan to access the **Joint UPR submission on Corporate Accountability** to learn more about SLAPP cases connected to business and human rights issues

For more information, evidence and data, please refer to the References and/or contact:
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For more information, evidence and data, please refer to the References and/or contact:
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