

Mandates of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; 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 and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Ref.: AL THA 2/2026
(Please use this reference in your reply)

30 March 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/14, 52/9, 59/4 and 52/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the conviction and sentence of the woman human rights defender Ms. Pimsiri Petchnamrob under section 112 of the Criminal Code of Thailand (lèse-majesté law) in direct connection with a speech she made as part of her participation in a pro-democracy peaceful assembly that took place on 29 November 2020.**

Ms. Pimsiri Petchnamrob is a long-standing human rights defender in Thailand and a collaborator with well-known international human rights organizations defending freedom of expression.

Special Procedures mandate holders have raised concern regarding the use of lèse-majesté legislation to criminalise human rights defenders, activists and critics for exercising their right to freedom of expression on several occasions in the past, most recently in [THA 4/2025](#) and [THA 10/2025](#). In particular, [findings](#) from a recent country visit to Thailand by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls raised serious concerns about the charges brought against at least 470 women human rights defenders for participating in pro-democracy activities since July 2020.

According to the information received:

On 29 November 2020, Ms. Pimsiri Petchnamrob delivered a speech during a pro-democracy peaceful assembly entitled 'Disarm Thai Feudalism' in front of the 11th Infantry Regiment King's Guard in Bangkok, as part of the 2020–2021 youth-led pro-democracy movement in Thailand. In her speech, she highlighted the inconsistency of Thailand's lèse-majesté law with international legal standards, citing a statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which argued for the incompatibility of section 112 of the Criminal Code with democratic principle. Besides, she addressed the relationship between the military and the monarchy, and the history of military coups in Thailand that hampered democracy.

On 25 November 2021, she was charged and indicted under a total of ten charges, including under section 112 (lèse-majesté), section 116 (sedition), and section 215 (participation in an illegal assembly) of the Criminal Code. She was released on bail with two conditions set by the Criminal Court: (1) not to engage in activities that damage the institution of the monarchy and (2) not to leave the country without the court's approval. Since then, the court has denied her permission to leave the country. Her trial started in June 2025 before the Criminal Court on Ratchadaphisek Road.

On 20 February 2026, the Criminal Court delivered its judgment. It dismissed charges under section 116 (sedition), finding insufficient evidence of intent to incite unrest and noting that the assembly was peaceful. Other charges, including failure to notify the public assembly and certain public order offences, were dismissed. Concerning the charges under section 112, Ms. Pimsiri was found guilty and initially sentenced to four years' imprisonment. The Court reduced the sentence by one third, citing mitigating circumstances arising from the defendant's beneficial testimony, resulting in a final sentence of two years and eight months' imprisonment without suspension. In its reasoning, the Court held that Ms. Pimsiri delivered a speech that included references to "Hitler". The Court interpreted these remarks as implying a comparison between King Rama X and Adolf Hitler. Additionally, the Court considered that calling to amend section 112 by referencing recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression did not fall within the scope of legitimate criticism in her professional capacity at the time. On this basis, the Court concluded that her statements constituted defamation of King Rama X under section 112.

Ms. Pimsiri was additionally found guilty of violating the Emergency Decree by participating in the 29 November 2020 assembly held during the period in which emergency regulations were in force. While the initial fine was set at THB 15,000, the Court reduced the penalty by one-third due to mitigating circumstances, resulting in a final fine of THB 10,000. The Court also found her guilty of using a sound amplification device without prior authorization under the Advertisement by Using Sound Amplifiers Control Act. For this offense, the Court imposed an administrative fine of THB 200. Following the judgment, a bail application was submitted for Ms. Pimsiri by her attorney. The Court approved their bail request, setting bail at THB 150,000, with a condition not to leave the country.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we express our grave concern about the conviction and sentence of the woman human rights defender Ms. Pimsiri Petchnamrob under section 112 of the Criminal Code in direct connection with a speech she made while participating in the 29 November 2020 pro-democracy peaceful assembly. Our concern also relates to the fact that women human rights defenders, journalists, activists and community leaders face different types of attacks and persecution while exercising their right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

We are alarmed by Ms. Pimsiri's conviction and sentence, which in light of the allegations described above, seems to be incompatible with international human rights

law, including articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and disproportionate to her action, notably a speech defending human rights and democracy and citing the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression in the context of a peaceful assembly.

We urge the Government of Thailand to put an end to the use of the Criminal Code, and particularly its provisions on lèse-majesté (section 112), to criminalize peaceful and legitimate work of human rights defenders, activists and dissidents or critical voices in the country, including women in the exercise of their human rights. In line with the previous repeated calls by Special Procedures mandate holders, the Human Rights Committee and other international mechanisms, we reiterate our call to your Excellency's Government to repeal section 112 of the Criminal Code or review it to ensure its compatibility with Thailand's obligations under international human rights law.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on the factual and legal basis of the charges brought against Ms. Pimsiri. Please indicate whether and how these charges and Ms. Pimsiri's conviction can be compatible with international human rights law and standards, including in relation to the right to freedom of expression protected under article 19 of the ICCPR. Please explain how Ms. Pimsiri's sentence can be considered proportionate.
3. Please provide information on the conditions attached to Ms. Pimsiri's bail, including the restrictions prohibiting her from leaving the country without prior court approval. Please explain how such conditions are compatible with international human rights standards, particularly the right to freedom of movement. In this regard, please also clarify the legal basis for the court's denial of her request to travel abroad.
4. Please indicate whether your Excellency's Government will take the necessary measures to review section 112 of the Criminal Code to ensure it is compatible with Thailand's international obligations under international human rights law, including the principles of legal certainty, necessity and proportionality and the limited restrictions to freedom of expression allowed under articles 19(3) and 20 ICCPR.
5. Please explain what measures have been taken to ensure that all human rights defenders in Thailand, in particular women, can carry out their

peaceful and legitimate activities, including exercising their right to freedom of expression as recognized under international standards, without fear of judicial harassment, retaliation, or other restrictions.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Claudia Flores

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Irene Khan

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Gina Romero

Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Mary Lawlor

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), acceded to by Thailand on 9 August 1985, which establishes that States shall modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women in order to eliminate the perpetuation of ideas related to the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. The Convention obligates States to refrain from discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions act accordingly. We also recall articles 2 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Thailand on 29 October 1996, which recognize the enjoyment of rights without distinction of any kind and guarantee the right to freedom of opinion and expression. These rights are also enshrined in articles 2 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

We recall the recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women during the last concluding observations to Thailand to 'ensure that women human rights defenders are not subject to criminal charges for their work, including by amending sections 112 and 116 of the Penal Code' ([CEDAW/C/THA/CO/8](#), para. 34(b)). The Human Rights Committee additionally stated in its concluding observations that 'The State party should review article 112 of the Criminal Code, on publicly offending the royal family, to bring it into line with article 19 of the Covenant. Pursuant to its general comment No. 34, the Committee reiterates that the imprisonment of persons for exercising their freedom of expression violates article 19 ([CCPR/C/THA/CO/2](#), para. 38) and expressed concern about restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the State party's legislation, including in the Criminal Code (para. 35).

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline, protects the freedom of the press as one of its core elements and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend.

In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Human Rights Committee asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee

stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” (para. 23).

The Committee further noted that the fact that certain forms of expression are considered insulting to a public figure does not justify the imposition of penalties. The Committee stated that “all public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority such as heads of state and government, are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition”. It also expressed its concern about laws such as *lèse-majesté*, and stressed that States parties should not prohibit criticism of institutions, such as the army or the administration (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 38).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, proving “in specific and individualized fashion the precise nature of the threat, and the necessity and proportionality of the specific action taken, in particular by establishing a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the threat” (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 35). The Human Rights Committee recalled that the relation between right and restriction and between norm and exception must not be reversed. In this regard, the Human Rights Committee stated that the restrictions must be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function”. (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34).

In its [resolution 12/16](#), the Human Rights Council called on States to refrain from imposing restrictions that are not consistent with article 19(3), including: discussion of government policies and political debate; reporting on human rights; engaging in peaceful demonstrations or political activities, including for peace or democracy; and expression of opinion and dissent, religion or belief, including by persons belonging to minorities or vulnerable groups (A/HRC/RES/12/26).

We would like to bring your attention to the last cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Thailand ([A/HRC/49/17](#)) from 2021, where several States recommended your Excellency’s Government to amend article 112 of the criminal code, review the *lèse-majesté* law to bring it into conformity with international standards and guarantee freedom of opinion and expression. While it is true that those recommendations were noted, we call for the implementation of the recommendations related to ensuring the right to freedom of expression and opinion that were indeed supported. We particularly call for the implementation of the recommendation made by the government of Latvia to ‘take measures to foster a safe, respectful and enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders, free from persecution, intimidation and harassment’, which was supported by your Excellency’s Government among other similar recommendations (A/HRC/49/17, para. 51.191).

We additionally recall [Resolution 68/181](#) adopted by the General Assembly, which “Urges States to acknowledge publicly the important and legitimate role of

women human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and development as an essential component of ensuring their protection” (A/RES/68/181, para. 7). The Resolution further “Calls upon States to ensure that human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, can perform their important role in the context of peaceful protests, in accordance with national legislation consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights law” (para. 8).

We would like to reiterate the recommendation made by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls in relation to the country visit to Thailand in December 2024, in which it called upon your Excellency’s Government to respect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly of women and girl human rights defenders, including by dropping charges brought against at least 470 women human rights defenders for participating in pro-democracy protests ([A/HRC/59/45/Add.2](#), para. 99(g)).

We also recall that the Working Group on discrimination against women has stated that “Women who seek to participate in political, economic, social or cultural leadership in their communities or nations may be acting in defiance of stereotypes obliging women to stay quiet and invisible and defer to male governance”. Women human rights defenders face high risks of criminalization and imprisonment due to their legitimate public activism, since they are perceived as defying traditional conceptions of family and gender roles ([A/HRC/41/33](#), para. 25). Additionally, in many jurisdictions, criminal laws are disproportionately applied to women because of their economic or social status, woman human rights defenders being among those particularly affected ([A/HRC/53/39](#), para. 32).

We additionally recall that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders declared that while women human rights defenders in general face the same risk as men, women defenders often face additional and different risks and obstacles that are gendered, intersectional and shaped by entrenched gender stereotypes and deeply held ideas and norms about who women are and how women should be’ ([A/HRC/40/60](#), para. 6).

We would also like to bring to your attention the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration, which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. It states that “[t]he right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law, and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection

of the rights and freedoms of others”. Article 22 of the ICCPR protects the right to freedom of association with others. As stated in a report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, States not only have a negative obligation to abstain from unduly interfering with the rights of peaceful assembly and of association but also have a positive obligation to facilitate and protect these rights in accordance with international human rights standards [A/HRC/17/27, para. 66; and A/HRC/29/25/Add.1].

Finally, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency’s Government the several provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, article 5 provides that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, to meet or assemble peacefully, to form, join and participate in non- governmental organizations, associations or groups, and to communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations. Further, article 6 (b) and (c) states that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to freely publish, impart or disseminate views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters. Moreover, article 12, paragraphs 2 and 3 provides that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the UDHR.