

Thailand: Drop charges against Angkhana Neelapaijit

(Bangkok, 29 November 2019) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly denounces the recent criminal defamation charges filed by Thammakaset Company Limited against Angkhana Neelapaijit, a former Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and prominent woman human rights defender. FORUM-ASIA urges Thai authorities to immediately and unconditionally dismiss the charges, and end the use of criminal defamation and other repressive laws as tools against human rights defenders.

The defamation charges stem from two tweets, which implied Angkhana's support for several human rights defenders, who are facing criminal charges from the same company. Angkhana retweeted two tweets, one of which drew particular attention as it included a link to a joint statement calling for all charges against the human rights defenders to be dropped, signed by 16 human rights organisations, including FORUM-ASIA. Both tweets linked to an interview of former Thammakaset employees alleging labour abuses.

As State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and being the first country in Asia to adopt a National Plan of Action on Business and Human Rights, Thailand must stand by its commitments to protect the fundamental freedoms of human rights defenders and activists who demand greater transparency and accountability from business enterprises and the private sector. The Government of Thailand must stand with Angkhana and other human rights defenders against business enterprises that violate human rights and threaten those who speak out, which is a breach of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. As an essential step, it must abolish criminal defamation as this has only served to stifle the freedom of expression of human rights defenders.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 81 member organisations in 21 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

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