



### **The NHRCT objects restriction of freedom of expression and recommends the government to listen to critical views, not taking legal actions in return**

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) is concerned with legal actions against actors, singers and public figures after their criticism widely published in social media demanding the government's responses to the severe situations of COVID-19 pandemic. The NHRCT has continuously monitored the situations and worried about the lawsuits against people who exercise the right to freedom of expression which is a fundamental right guaranteed by article 34 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017) and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Thailand is a party and has an obligation to comply with.

Although the exercise of such right may be subject to certain restrictions for respect of the rights of others; for the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public health or morals, it must be undertaken strictly when necessary. The opinions of public figures and the general public on the administration of the government related to the control and mitigation of impacts arising during the situation of COVID-19 pandemic faced and severely affected does not threaten security or public order. The NHRCT deems that they want to exchange information and give recommendations to the government in good faith although there may be emotional words which are popularly used in those communications.

Moreover, freedom of expression is a fundamental right in a democratic society, and essential for the right to participate in public affairs, as recognized by article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The government, therefore, should take people's opinions and criticisms into consideration to improve the management for effective problem solving.

Finally, the NHRCT urges all parties to consider constructive communication without the use of hate speech and to check the accuracy of information beforehand. The NHRCT also requests all parties, particularly the government, to respect different opinions and criticisms and to cease legal actions in response to those who express their views in good faith. This will lead to joint efforts in solving the crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic and will advance the democratic society to overcome challenges by participation of all sectors.

Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand  
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