Call on authorities of Thailand to end the judicial harassment of lawyer Arnon Nampa

Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), The Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW) and the International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD) condemn the latest conviction of Thai human rights lawyer Arnon Nampa under Section 112 (lèse-majesté) of the Thai Criminal Code. On 30 October 2026, Mr. Nampa was sentenced to four years in prison, subsequently reduced to two years and eight months, for speeches delivered during a peaceful assembly. This marks his twelfth conviction under the controversial lèse-majesté law, bringing his cumulative prison sentence to 34 years, five months and 20 days. Mr. Nampa has been detained since 26 September 2023.

Background: Arnon Nampa and the prosecutions against him

Arnon Nampa is a prominent Thai human rights lawyer and a founding member of Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR) who has dedicated himself to defending individuals charged under the lèse-majesté law, despite facing sustained harassment by state authorities as a result of his work. In addition to his legal practice, Mr. Nampa has participated in public discussions concerning constitutional reform, democracy, and the role of the monarchy. He received the Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2025, and the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights in 2021 in recognition of his efforts to challenge the violent crackdown on protesters during Thailand's political unrest. His public advocacy during Thailand's 2020–2021 pro-democracy movement has resulted in numerous criminal proceedings, primarily under the controversial lèse-majesté law, which makes criticism of the monarchy punishable by up to 15 years in prison, equivalent to the penalty for manslaughter.

Between 2020 and 2022, authorities arrested and detained Mr. Nampa several times in different cases. He has faced 14 separate lèse-majesté cases and has been convicted in 12 of them. In addition to the criminal proceedings, Mr. Nampa has also been subjected to disbarment proceedings before the Lawyer Council of Thailand under the Royal Patronage, which seek the revocation of his license to practice law in connection with a speech delivered during the protest on 3 August 2020. The proceedings, arising from Mr. Nampa's exercise of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, have remained pending for more than five years and are currently under consideration by the Lawyer Council's Professional Etiquette Committee.

Judgment by the Court of First Instance on 30 October 2026

The present case concerns speeches delivered at a public assembly on 25 November 2020. Mr. Nampa's speech addressed the King's alleged interference in the constitutional amendment process, the allocation of public funds to the monarchy, and amendments to the Crown Property Act.

On 30 October 2026, the Criminal Court found Mr. Nampa and four colleagues guilty under Section 112 and sentenced them to four years' imprisonment. It reduced the sentence by one-third in light of their testimony, resulting in a final sentence of two years and eight months. The Court found that Mr. Nampa's speech defamed the King and undermined the inviolable status the Constitution grants him.

Judicial harassment and misuse of Section 112

Mr. Nampa's prosecution forms part of a broader pattern of judicial harassment and criminal proceedings against lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists and pro-democracy activists under Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code. The broad interpretation and application of this provision have enabled the criminalisation of peaceful expression concerning the monarchy, severely restricting freedom of expression and public debate while exposing individuals to lengthy prison sentences for exercising their fundamental rights. UN human rights experts have repeatedly called on Thailand to repeal its lèse-majesté laws, raising serious concerns about their incompatibility with international human rights standards.

The repeated prosecutions of Mr. Nampa, the accumulation of lengthy prison sentences and the persistent denial of bail raise serious concerns that criminal proceedings are being used to punish and deter legitimate human rights advocacy and peaceful political expression. The prosecution and imprisonment of a human rights lawyer for participating in public debate not only violate his fundamental rights but also undermine the independence of the legal profession. Such measures risk creating a chilling effect on other lawyers, discouraging them from engaging in human rights advocacy, representing individuals in politically sensitive cases or speaking out on matters of public interest.

These concerns are further reinforced by the findings of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD). In its Opinion No. 28/2024 concerning Arnon Nampa, adopted during its 100th session in August 2024, the Working Group concluded that his deprivation of liberty was arbitrary and in violation of Thailand's obligations under international human rights law. Notably, the Working Group found that Mr. Nampa had been "deprived of his liberty on discriminatory grounds on the basis of his political or other opinion regarding the lèse-majesté law". It therefore called on the Thai authorities to release him immediately and grant him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations, in accordance with international law. Despite these findings and recommendations, Mr. Nampa remains imprisoned and continues to face further convictions under Section 112.

Exclusion of Section 112 in Thailand's recently enacted amnesty law

In August 2026, Thailand enacted a law that provides amnesty to individuals charged, prosecuted, and convicted in connection with political expression and/or public assemblies between 2005 and 2025. However, the law explicitly excludes offenses under Section 112. Since November 2020, close to 300 people have been charged and/or prosecuted under Section 112, including 20 children. Among them are Mr. Nampa and at least 32 other political prisoners who are currently detained in prison.

Thailand's international human rights obligations

Thailand is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and has obligations to guarantee the rights to liberty, a fair trial, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and participation in public affairs under Articles 9, 14, 19, 21 and 25. Furthermore, the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers recognise the essential role lawyers play in upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights. Principle 23 provides that lawyers, like other citizens, are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they have the right to take part in public discussion of matters

concerning the law, the administration of justice, and the promotion and protection of human rights, without suffering professional restrictions or other reprisals because of their lawful actions or membership in a lawful organisation. The continued prosecution and detention of Mr. Nampa are inconsistent with these internationally recognised standards.

Thailand also serves on the UN Human Rights Council for the 2025-2027 term. Under UN General Assembly resolution 60/251, members of the Council must uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. While campaigning for its seat, Thailand pledged to "take steps towards developing and revising legislation, policies and regulations to be in line with international human rights treaties to which Thailand is party and ensure effectiveness of the national implementation thereof." Thailand is also scheduled to undergo its fourth Universal Periodic Review on 9 November 2026. In the previous cycle, Member States made at least 12 recommendations to Thailand concerning Section 112. The undersigned organisations consider that the conviction of Mr Nampa under Section 112, nine days before the review, is difficult to reconcile with these commitments.

Call to the authorities

The undersigned organisations call on the authorities of Thailand to

1. **Immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Nampa**, in accordance with the findings and recommendations of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in Opinion No. 28/2024, and ensure his right to adequate compensation and other reparations;
2. **Put an end to all forms of judicial harassment against Mr. Nampa**, including criminal and disciplinary proceedings arising from the legitimate exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and ensure that he is not subjected to further reprisals for his work as a lawyer;
3. **Guarantee Mr. Nampa's physical and psychological integrity**, as well as his access to adequate medical care and legal counsel, for as long as he remains in detention;
4. **Repeal or amend Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code** to bring Thailand's legal framework into full compliance with its international human rights obligations, particularly the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly under the ICCPR, and ensure that criminal legislation is not used to suppress peaceful dissent or legitimate human rights advocacy;
5. **Amend the amnesty law to include offenses under Section 112 of the Criminal Code in the amnesty;**
6. **Ensure that all lawyers in Thailand can carry out their professional activities freely, independently and without fear of intimidation, harassment or reprisals**, including when representing clients in politically sensitive cases or participating in public debate, in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

Signatories

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