

September 17, 2016

Prayut Chan-o-cha  
Prime Minister of Thailand

Excellency,

Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), an independent non-governmental institution committed to promoting and defending freedom of expression is writing to express concern over the media regulation bill proposed by military-appointed the National Reform Steering Assembly (NRSA).

According to Southeast Asian Press Alliance, if the bill passed into law it would establish a new 11-member National Professional Media Council. It also could open the door for intervention by political and business entities with the media's work, which ultimately would affect the people's right to information."

The media council will have administrative powers over the media including ordering a media outlet to withdraw the professional media identification card of a mistaken media practitioner or cancel the membership of media organization from the media council.

Journalists or media organizations, who or which have been stripped of their membership under the council, will not have the liberty to address the complaints by themselves and will automatically be put under the scrutiny of the media council.

Moreover, the complaints system in the bill does not protect journalists or media organizations from criminal or civil lawsuits, as the law does not preclude the filing of cases in court.

Section 55 states that in cases where a legal order against a media practitioner conflicts with media ethics or violates the freedom of the press, the media practitioner can refuse to follow the order by submitting a letter declaring the reasons. However, the end of the section limits this option if existing laws have been broken. Thus, any legal case filed immediately prevents such a refusal.

The NRSA proposed bill seems to regulate the media than to protect its rights and freedom. PPF urges your government to redraft the bill that will not curb the press freedom in Thailand.

I thank you for your attention and will welcome your comments.

Yours Sincerely,  
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