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## **Malaysia: Report on Media Law Reform Needs**

Today, the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), in collaboration with the International Federation of Journalists, is launching the report *Malaysia: Media Law Reform Blueprint*. The report provides a broad look at the way regulation of the media works in Malaysia, assessing both historic legislation and the many new laws which have been introduced recently. These do not deliver on the impressive promises Pakatan Harapan, the largest party in the Unity Government, made in the leadup to the 2022 elections, with some of the most problematical rules, including section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, actually having been made worse and some commitments, for example to repeal the Sedition Act 1948, having been resiled from.

*"I think it is fair to say that most human rights observers were hoping for far more from this government,"* said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"At the same time, there have been some positive developments, such as an encouraging draft Media Council Bill, although even there we have a number of recommendations which we hope the government will take into account."*

The report provides a detailed overview of key freedom of expression standards, including on regulation of the media and digital communications, the right to information, and restrictions on freedom of expression. It then assesses the Malaysian legal framework against those standards, looking at issues like the independence of regulatory bodies, efforts to promote diversity in the media, the regulation of the print and broadcast media and digital communications, and secrecy provisions, as well as a number of the key content restrictions found in different laws.

The report makes numerous recommendations for reform, of which some of the key ones are:

- Repeal entirely the Sedition Act 1948, the Official Secrets Act 1972 and the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.
- Move forward promptly to adopt a strong right to information law.
- Reflect, in the legal environment for the media and digital communications, the ideas that bodies which regulate the media and digital communications should be independent of government and that a key aim of regulation should be to promote media diversity.
- Introduce improvements to the Media Council Bill before adopting it.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the many restrictions on content in different laws with a view to amending them to bring them into line with international standards.

The report is available [here](#).

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