



23 January 2017 – Yangon, Myanmar

## Myanmar's Digital Content Restrictions Violate Freedom of Expression

A workshop hosted by the Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network (MMLN) and the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) on 21 January provided the setting for lawyers from across the country to agree that the Electronic Transactions Law and Telecommunications Law requires immediate reform. The discussion focused on the need to repeal the criminal defamation standards in the two laws (in sections 34(d) and 66(d), respectively), both of which have been used to imprison government critics.

*"Democracy is not just about holding elections, but is also about having a system which respects the fundamental rights of people, including to criticise their leaders,"* said Michael Karanicolas, Senior Legal Officer, CLD. *"These laws have no place in a democratic system, and should be scrapped to allow freedom of expression to take root."*

In addition to problematical criminal defamation rules, participants noted several technical problems with the laws, according to which individuals could be held liable for forwarding an email without the consent of its original author. The event feeds into a broader advocacy movement, including a major protest against the Telecommunications Law that took place on 22 January in Yangon.

*"Myanmar's legal community has an important role to play by pushing for reform of problematical laws, such as the Electronic Transactions Law and the Telecommunications Law,"* said Than Zaw, Secretary of the Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network.

For more information, including a background paper on digital content restrictions in Myanmar that was prepared for the event, go to: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/myanmars-digital-content-restrictions-violate-freedom-of-expression/>.

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