



29 January 2018 – Yangon, Myanmar

Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network Hosts Discussion on Freedom Online and General Assembly

Leading civil society groups, media lawyers from around the country and international experts met on 27 January 2018 to discuss proposals to reform laws which restrict freedom of expression online. Over the last few years more than 100 cases, mostly for defamation, have been brought under these laws, involving journalists, political actors and human rights defenders. The aim of the workshop was to agree on media reform proposals that will limit abusive cases and support Myanmar's transition to democracy.

"It is very important to try to generate consensus among civil society organisations regarding proposals to reform laws which are being used to restrict freedom of expression online," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director, CLD. *"This workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss very concrete law reform proposals."*

The workshop focused on three laws in particular, the 2004 Electronic Transactions Law, the Official Secrets Act, 1923 and the 2013 Telecommunications Law. A set of concrete draft proposals for reform of the most problematical provisions in these laws was discussed at the workshop, with participants putting forward ideas for further development of the proposals.

The event was organised by Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network (MMLN) and the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), with support from International Media Support (IMS) and FOJO Media Institute. It took forward earlier discussions on the issue, including a workshop hosted by MMLN and CLD on 9 December 2017. The workshop was followed by a General Assembly meeting of MMLN members.

"MMLN has made enormous progress in the three years since it was founded with support from CLD and IMS," said Than Zaw, (then) Secretary of the Myanmar Media Lawyers' Network. *"We successfully elected a new Executive Committee, which provides us with an opportunity for renewal and the involvement of both old and new members in running MMLN. MMLN will continue to develop the proposals to reform these three laws and, together with civil society groups and journalists, we will then advocate for law reform."*

The reform proposals, in both English and Burmese, are available at: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/?p=3902&preview=true>.

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