

Some Recent Daily Human Right Violations in Thailand

Friday 8 June 2018, by [PRACHATAI](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2018).

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Bangkok Post editor removed after refusing to tone down junta criticisms

The Bangkok Post confirmed on Monday that it had removed its news editor Umesh Pandey after he refused to alter his critical coverage of the military government, given that the newspaper plans to invite the junta head to join its birthday party, said an executive.

On 14 May 2018, Umesh Pandey, editor of the Bangkok Post, confirmed on Facebook that the newspaper had dismissed him for his recent criticisms of the military government.

“The hard-hitting news that we have produced in the 22 months of my leadership is a testament to what we as a team that is down by nearly 60 people have managed to achieve,” read Pandey’s Facebook post. “But when asked to ‘tone down’ I did not budge.”

Pandey said he was “blunt” in telling newspaper leadership that he would rather “lose [his] position” than “bow [his] head.”

“The axe finally came down on me just 60 days before my 2-year contract ended,” he added in the post.



Umesh Pandey (Photo from his Facebook)

The deputy chief operating officer of the Post Group, Na Karn Laohawilai, said that newspaper did not fire Pandey, but merely transferred him to another section. Na Karn said that the ‘transfer’ was

not due to his criticisms of the military government, but rather his improper managing skills.

The Deputy Chief Operating Officer of the Post Group, Nha-Kran Loahavilai, said that newspaper did not fire Pandey, but merely transferred him to another section. Nha-Kran said that the 'transfer' was not due to his criticisms of the military government, but rather his improper management skills.

But the Post Deputy Chief appeared to contradict himself when he said the final straw was when a member of Pandey's team wrote on 11 May that the Thai junta should take a lesson from the Malaysian election results. Nha-Kran said that the report was unfair to the Thai government, and inappropriate given that the newspaper is inviting Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to its 72nd birthday ceremony.

When the Executive Board informed Pandey, the editor reacted aggressively, so the Board decided to transfer him, Nha-Kran added.

"So it's not about the military interfering or getting him to stop attacking the military. I have many witnesses on this issue. Actually, we don't want to talk about it but since he talked first, we have to come out and talk too," Nha-Kran told the media.

Apart from Nha-kan, various former and current journalists at the Bangkok Post also confirmed his Umesh's misbehaviour and mismanagement, saying that nearly 50 staff left the newspaper as they dislike the editor.

"There are few people in the office who like him," one source, a staff writer who worked under Umesh, told Khaosod English. "When many people quit, one reason was that they didn't like him. He changed many company procedures."

Umesh said in response that there is no proof of his mismanagement, and the executive is just trying to slander him.

Pandey is the second editor this year allegedly removed for criticising the junta. In late March, PPTV news director Vanchai Tantivitayapitak was also forced to resign after the military government pressured the station.



The report on Malaysian Elections which leads to Pandey's removal

* Submitted on Tue, 15/05/2018 - 17:33:

<https://prachatai.com/english/node/7747>

Police say no to commemoration of 2010 crackdown

The Bangkok police have asked a pro-democracy activist to seek permission from the junta to host a symbolic activity to commemorate the 2010 crackdown on the red shirts.

On 15 May 2018, Sombat Boonngamanong, a pro-democracy activist and the leader of the Grin Party, posted on Facebook that Lumpini Police Station had rejected his request to hold an assembly at Ratchaprasong intersection on 19 May, the eighth anniversary of the 2010 crackdown on red-shirt protesters.

To commemorate the crackdown, Sombat planned to host a symbolic activity at a McDonald's near the intersection where the incident took place. In his request, he told the police that over 30,001 people were expected to join.

The police on Tuesday rejected his request, saying that the number of participants was so high that they could obstruct public transportation. The authorities added that any commemoration of the 2010 crackdown would constitute a political activity and violate the Head of National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) Order 3/2015, the junta's ban on public gatherings of five people or more.

The police then asked Sombat to re-submit his request with an adjusted number of participants and get permission from the NCPO.

One day later, Sombat re-submitted the request. He reduced the number of participants into three: Nuttha Mahatanan, a prominent pro-election activist; Kittichai Ngamchaipisit, a co-founder of the Commoners Party; and Sombat himself. He added that he had also invited Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, the key leader of the Future Forward Party, but he was not free.

He told the media that he had not asked for permission from the NCPO since he thought that a public gathering of just three people might not violate the NCPO order.

From March to May 2010, the Abhisit government launched armed military operations with the goal of seizing the red-shirt protest sites in Bangkok. 19 May marked the end of the crackdown after the red-shirt leaders surrendered to the police. Many civilians were shot dead by high-velocity bullets, and total death toll of the nearly three-month-long operation is 98. Nearly 70 were slain at Ratchaprasong intersection.



The poster of Sombat's event (Photo from his Facebook)

* Submitted on Wed, 16/05/2018 - 18:52:

<https://prachatai.com/english/node/7748>

Blind lèse majesté convict faces new cybercrime charge

After an unknown guarantor bailed her out on a royal defamation charge in January, a blind woman in Yala has been sentenced to another jail term for breaking the Computer Crimes Act.

On 13 May 2018, Nahita (surname withheld due to privacy concerns), revealed that her sister, Nuruhayati Masoe, has been imprisoned since early March for violating the controversial Computer Crimes Act.

According to Nahita, on 5 March, the public prosecutor indicted Nuruhayati on the cybercrime charge for posting on Facebook a link to a radio programme hosted by red-shirt activists on 10 October 2016. The prosecutor claimed that her action caused public panic and threats to national security. The court sentenced her to two years in prison but halved the sentence because she pleaded guilty.

This is the second time that Nurhayati, who is 23 years old and blind, has been given a prison sentence after she faced a previous jail term for a royal defamation charge.

In January 2018, the Provincial Court of Yala sentenced Nuruhayati to three years in prison for violating Article 112 of the Criminal Code, the lèse majesté law. She was charged for sharing an article by Giles Ji Ungpakorn, an academic and political activist who fled Thailand to the UK after facing a royal defamation charge. Because she pleaded guilty, the court halved the jail term to one year and six months.

During the appeal, however, an unknown guarantor offered bail for Nuruhayati. The lawyer and her family confirmed that they did not know who the bail guarantor is or how much the bail was.

In February 2018, the Court of Appeal acquitted her of all charges, reasoning that the defendant was totally blind and had been enrolled in a blind school for only two years. The judge believed that Nuruhayati posted the message without knowing that it constituted lèse majesté.

Another significant feature of her case is that the court ruled that the royal defamation charge is a malum prohibitum (an action that is a crime only because it is prohibited by law), not a malum in se (an action that is a crime because it is inherently wrong), which is very rare in lèse majesté prosecutions.

A month after being acquitted, however, she has now been found guilty of violating the Computer Crimes Act.



Illustration by Khai Maew

* Submitted on Tue, 15/05/2018 - 17:13:
<https://prachatai.com/english/node/7746>

Press associations oppose broadcast ban on red-shirt TV

Two major journalist organisations have condemned the recent order to suspend for 30 days the broadcasting licence of a TV station run by red-shirt leaders.

On 11 May 2018, the Thai Journalists Association and the Thai Broadcast Journalists Association released a joint statement denouncing the order by the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to suspend the broadcast licence of Peace TV for 30 days.

Citing National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) Orders 97/2014 and 103/2014, the NBTC imposed the month-long suspension on Peace TV starting on 9 May. The commission claimed that between 26 March and 9 April, the station broadcast four shows with allegedly seditious content and tried to incite national conflict.

But the press associations stated that the NBTC's order constitutes suppression of press freedom and violates the 2017 Constitution's sections on freedom of information, and urged the Commission to revoke the suspension. They suggested that the NBTC ban only the allegedly seditious programmes rather than the whole station, since the suspension will largely affect other staff who have no involvement with the problematic shows.

"The fact that the NBTC cited NCPO orders 97/2014 and 103/2014 is equivalent to the NBTC allowing an outside authority to directly destroy the independence of the NBTC itself, and it could also affect media organisations under the supervision of the NBTC," read the statement.

Peace TV station is run by leaders of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, also known as the 'red shirts', and this is the fifth broadcasting ban imposed on the channel under the junta. The first seven-day ban was in April 2015, followed by a 30-day ban in July 2016, a month-long ban in August 2017, and a 15-day ban in February 2018. All were related to allegedly seditious content and criticism of the ruling junta.

* Submitted on Mon, 14/05/2018 - 14:35:
<https://prachatai.com/english/node/7745>

No pro-election message on May Day, say authorities

Soldiers and police officers have barred workers holding May Day activities in Pathum Thani from expressing any message urging the junta to hold general elections.

On 1 May 2018, the authorities ordered workers in Rangsit District of Pathum Thani Province, to remove all messages related to elections from their May Day rally. According to Sriprai Nonsee, one of the rally organisers, the police and soldiers on 30 April summoned them to answer questions about their activities.

The authorities asked to know the names of the organisers and ordered the rally not to mention the general election, even though it was one of the workers' main proposals, said Sriprai. They also threatened to prosecute the organisers if they refused to obey.

On May Day morning, the workers gathered to march to Pathum Thani Provincial Hall to submit their proposals to the Governor. The proposals include: 1) a welfare state; 2) fair pay; 3) rights to form a union and fair negotiation; 4) safety in the workplace; 5) democracy; and 6) elections this year.



Workers submit the petition to the Pathum Thani City Hall

Many workers failed to join the march as the police ordered the organisers to begin earlier than planned. The authorities also asked them to remove all signs and banners related to the elections. Upon arriving at the Provincial Hall, undercover police officers told marchers to remove headbands with the message "election this year," and warned them not to use loudspeakers.

Sriprai told Prachatai that the workers included democracy and elections in the main issues of this year's May Day rally because the military government has not only failed to improve workers' wellbeing but also significantly suppressed workers' rights and freedom of expression.

"At first, the military told us to be patient and wait for one year, or two years at most, but now it's been almost four years, and it will certainly be over four years," Sriprai stated, adding that employers are likely to be more exploitative under the junta than under a civilian government because workers' freedom is limited.



The “election this year” headbands

* Submitted on Wed, 02/05/2018 - 15:54:

<https://prachatai.com/english/node/7730>
