

# **Amnesty International in Thailand supports the coup, extra constitutional powers for the King and will therefore not act publically on *lèse majesté***

Tuesday 22 September 2009, by [UNGPAKORN Giles Ji](#) (Date first published: 22 September 2009).

Democracy and freedom of expression in Thailand have suffered greatly since the September 2006 military coup. Opponents of the government and the military are being charged with *lèse majesté* (insulting the King). Some are in jail for long periods, just for making statements. Many human rights activists have questioned why Amnesty International refuses to adopt *lese majeste* prisoners of conscience.

Annegret Meiners, the Laos/Thailand Coordinator for AI, has stated that those who are concerned with *lese majeste* are all supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. According to Ms Meiners, any demands for the abolition of *lese majeste* and that the Thai King have the same constitutional status as the British or Japanese Monarchs, would pave the way for a return of Thaksin. Ms Meiners is therefore saying that AI supports extra constitutional powers for the Thai King and military coups.

Benjamin Zawacki, South-east Asia researcher for Amnesty International, told IPS News that the Thai Monarchy has played an important role in the protection of human rights and therefore needs to be protected. There is absolutely no evidence that the King has ever protected human rights. His support for the blood bath on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 is an example. He also supported Thaksin's war on drugs, which killed 3000 people. The Amnesty International office in Thailand is closely associated with Yellow Shirts who have used systematic violence in order to destroy democracy.

Do ordinary members and the Head Office of Amnesty International know and support what is being done in their name?

Giles Ji Ungpakorn

22 September 2009

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***Below is a (rough) translation of Ms Meiners' e-mail to a concerned German.***

The original, in German, is posted on the blog <http://wdpress.blog.co.uk/>

Dear XXXXX

Amnesty International is swamped right now with letters from Germans who express themselves on the topic of *lese Majesté* in Thailand. Due to the abundance of letters, please allow me a short reply.

Amnesty International has evolved over the years and has long evolved beyond the prisoner aid organization that it once was. It has become a human rights organization, which deals with various kinds of human rights violations, including the use of political prisoners as well, but not always exclusively. Since it is impossible to deal with all human rights violations of this world, Amnesty International can only set strategic priorities that are determined afresh each year, unless a sudden issue is so explosive that must be immediately dealt with.

In Thailand, Amnesty International is concerned at present mainly with the Lao Hmong refugees in the north and the unrest in the south. If Amnesty International is now beset by a number of web pages and letters that are against *lese Majesté* in Thailand, and they are exclusively Thaksin and UDD supporters, demanding that this law be abolished, the presumption must be that this is an attempt to pressurise Amnesty International in order that these people can have the right to insult the King. The king is the strongest opponent and the biggest obstacle to a return of Thaksin to Thailand. Denigration of the King and demands that the Monarchy be turned into a constitutional monarchy in the same model as England and Japan - as is demanded again and again - would likely allow a return of Thaksin.

During the reign of Thaksin, Amnesty International recorded the most serious human rights violations in Thailand. About 2500 dead were caused solely by Thaksin's "war on terror" ("drugs", surely?) A return by Thaksin would be a major human rights disaster.

Amnesty International acknowledges that the *lese Majesté* law is against freedom of expression and prison sentence is justified under any circumstances (*maybe she meant "unjustified"?*). But the organization also knows there are other ways to achieve a goal. It does not always have to be public. Above all, Amnesty International can not be orchestrated and used as a tool of those who want to push through a political opinion.

Sincerely,

Annegret Meiners  
Laos / Thailand Coordination  
Amnesty International

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