

Attacks on the Press in 2013 - Thailand

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Key Developments

- Editor is sentenced to jail for articles critical of the royal family.
- Authorities extend online censorship to social media.

Thailand's clampdown on press and Internet freedoms continued in 2013 as large anti-government street demonstrations undermined political stability. Broadcast journalists were threatened with arrest by authorities for live streaming protest speeches. At least two local and one foreign reporter were assaulted by protesters over perceived pro-government bias in their coverage. Authorities continued to crack down on coverage deemed critical of the royal family by sentencing newsmagazine editor Somyot Prueksakasemsuk to 11 years in prison and banning a political documentary on the grounds that its title could be construed as critical of the monarchy. Amid an outcry, the Ministry of Culture later lifted the censorship order, saying it had made a "technical mistake." Political cartoonist Somchai Katanyutanan faced defamation charges over comments he posted on Facebook about a speech Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra made in Mongolia. The offices of his newspaper, *Thai Rath*, were later attacked by unknown assailants. Thai Public Broadcasting Service political editor Sermsuk Kasitpradit was investigated in connection with comments he made on Facebook speculating on a possible military coup. Information and Communication Technology Minister Anudith Nakornthap then warned social media users that clicking "like" or sharing online comments deemed a threat to national security could be construed as criminal acts punishable by imprisonment.

[Refworld note: *The sections that follow represent a best effort to transcribe onto a single page information that appears in tabs on the CPJ's own pages, which also include a number of dynamically-generated graphics not readily reproducible here. Refworld researchers are therefore strongly recommended to check against the original report: [Attacks on the Press in 2013.](#)*

Imprisoned journalist: 1

Tensions between groups loyal to and those opposed to the self-exiled Premier Thaksin Shinawatra motivated successive governments to clamp down on partisan media outlets. At least one journalist was imprisoned in Thailand in late 2013, according to CPJ research.

Journalists killed since 1992: 10

In 2013, a Thai court ruled that Italian photojournalist Fabio Polenghi was killed by a bullet fired by a soldier while covering street unrest in 2010, a verdict that raised hopes of ending the cycle of impunity in the killing of journalists in Thailand.

At least 10 journalists have been killed for their work in Thailand since 1992, when CPJ started compiling detailed records on journalist fatalities.

Anti-press laws: 3

Authorities in Thailand use at least three main laws to stifle dissent and criticism, according to CPJ research. In December, two journalists were charged with criminal defamation under the Computer Crime Act for reporting on alleged human rights abuses committed by the Thai Navy.

Breakdown of repressive legislation:

Lèse majesté:

Known as Article 112 of the criminal code, the law criminalizes defaming or insulting the king, queen, heir apparent or regent of the Thai royal family. Violations are punishable by three to 15 years in prison.

2007 Computer Crime Act:

Implemented after a 2006 military coup, the act bans any online criticism of the Thai royal family and, more broadly, any materials considered a threat to national security. Violations are punishable by five years' imprisonment for each comment considered an offense.

Defamation law:

Under Chapter 3, Sections 326-333 of the Thai criminal code, defamation and libel are criminal offenses that are punishable by two years' imprisonment and fines. Politicians and private businesses frequently use the laws to stifle media criticism.

Internet use: 26.5%

Growing Internet penetration rates have fostered a vibrant blogosphere in Thailand. Authorities have responded by blocking tens of thousands of websites and Web pages, mainly on the grounds that the material was critical of the monarchy.

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