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Asia - Thailand

Lèse-majesté on trial

Appeal court urged to overturn website editor's conviction

7 November 2013

Tomorrow, a Bangkok court will hear *Prachatai* news website editor **Chiranuch Premchaiporn's** appeal against her conviction on a charge of lèse-majesté for failing to remove visitor comments critical of the monarchy from her site with sufficient speed.

Chiranuch is better known by the pen-name of **Jiew**.

Reporters Without Borders reiterates its unconditional support for this experienced journalist, the targeted victim of a biased judicial system that lends itself to political use of the charge of lèse-majesté.

"It is vital that Jiew's appeal should be examined impartially and that she should be cleared of all charges for good," Reporters Without Borders said. "The freedom of all online, print and broadcast media journalists is at stake. What third parties say or post on a websites cannot be blamed on the journalists, especially when they delete the comments.

"We urge the authorities to do everything possible to ensure that journalists cease to be under permanent threat of lèse-majesté prosecutions and the heavy penalties that accompany them. Without decriminalizing media offences, Thailand will not be able to claim that it respects international standards on freedom of expression and information."

Chiranuch was arrested in [March 2010](#) under article 15 of the Computer Crimes Act and paragraph 112 of the penal code (on lèse-majesté) for failing to act with sufficient speed to remove comments insulting the monarchy that had been posted by visitors to the site.

[On 30 May 2012](#), a judge sentenced her to a fine of 30,000 bahts and a year in prison, but immediately reduced this to 20,000 bahts (500 euros) and a suspended eight-month jail sentence on the grounds that she cooperated with the authorities and had no criminal record.

Chiranuch appealed because she refuses to be held responsible for the comments posted by visitors to the site and because she wants a complete acquittal. The police also appealed against the sentence on the grounds that it was too lenient.

Thailand is ranked 135th out of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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