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Asia - Thailand

Draconian censorship

Is the Thai junta opting for the Burmese censorship model?

27 June 2014

Thailand's military junta, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), announced on 25 June that it is creating panels to control media content and to prevent the media from being used to spread false information that could incite hatred and violence against the monarchy.

The junta said each media sector – radio, TV, print media, online media, social networks and foreign media – will be monitored by a different panel and each panel will have representatives from the police, army, navy, air force, foreign ministry, prime minister's office, public relations department and other state bodies.

Criminal proceedings may be brought against media that broadcast inappropriate content. The panels will prepare regular reports for Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha, the head of the junta, while reporting cases of "false" information to him immediately.

"The creation of these panels constitutes a new stage in the gagging of news and information by the Thai military junta," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk. *"Is the junta in the process of creating a system of censorship based on the former Burmese model?"*

The composition of the panels and complete absence of media representatives suggest a level of freedom approaching zero. No details have been given on how the panels will operate. Reporters Without Borders urges the NCPO to abandon this plan altogether as it could introduce an unprecedented degree of censorship in Thailand.

Many measures violating freedom of information have already been taken since the 22 May military coup, including a [broadcasting ban on many TV stations](#) that refused to comply with the military's demands, and the [interrogation and arrests](#) of journalists critical of the army or monarchy.

The news website *Phuketwan* is currently the target of a libel suit by the Thai navy for quoting a paragraph from a *Reuters* report on the smuggling of Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Burma. The initial hearings have been set for March 2015.

Thailand is ranked 130th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
