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Asia - Thailand

Slow justice

Italian journalist's family fears his army killers will be pardoned

31 May 2013

A Bangkok criminal court investigating Italian freelance [journalist Fabio Polenghi's death](#) during clashes between security forces and "Red Shirt" demonstrators in Bangkok on 19 May 2010 ruled yesterday that a soldier fired the bullet that caused his death.

After talking to Polenghi's sister, Elisabetta Polenghi, Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities not to pardon those responsible for the fatal shot.

"We take note of the court's ruling, which comes three years after Polenghi's death, and we urge the government to allow the judicial system to operate by refraining from granting a pardon to those responsible," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Those responsible must be identified and brought to justice, so that this journalist's death, whether accidental or not, does not go unpunished."

The court found that Polenghi was killed by a .223 calibre high velocity bullet of the kind used by the army, and that the only army unit present at the time was the Second Cavalry Division of the King's Guard, which was tasked with dispersing demonstrators.

Although the court concluded that this unit was responsible, it did not identify the soldier who fired the shot or determine the orders that the unit had been given at the time.

A journalist, Robert Cox, and a police lieutenant colonel attached to the justice ministry's Central Institute of Forensic Science, Watcharat Chalermsooksant, testified that the shot came from the direction of the soldiers.

The Polenghi family's lawyer said that Polenghi's sister, who gave a news conference outside the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand on Wednesday evening, intended to bring a legal action against Abhisit Vejjajiva, who was prime minister at the time, and Suthep Thaugsuban, who was his deputy for security affairs.

"The court's conclusion that the bullet that killed Fabio came from the army side is very important," Elisabetta Polenghi told Reporters Without Borders. "But it should be just the first step. We still don't know who fired the shot. For the time being there is no accountability. I'm very worried the government will vote an amnesty."

The *Bangkok Post* [quoted](#) Gen, Prayuth Chan-ocha, the head of the army, as saying the court's ruling could lead to a criminal prosecution. The case could end up going to appeal and then to the supreme court, he added.

Department of Special Investigation chief Tharit Pengdit told *Agence France-Presse* in September 2011 that the army was responsible for the shot that [killed](#) Japanese cameraman **Hiro Muramoto** during clashes between government forces and "Red Shirt" protesters in Bangkok on 10 April 2010.

[Read the Reporters Without Borders report on violence against the media during the unrest in Bangkok in 2010.](#)

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