

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/thailand-both-pro-and-anti-government-02-12-2013,45538.html>

Asia - Thailand

Media targeted

Both pro- and anti-government demonstrators threaten media

2 December 2013

Reporters Without Borders is very worried by the harassment of TV stations by both pro- and anti-government demonstrators.

"It is clear from the latest events that the demonstrators have not heeded our appeals and the appeals of Thai journalists' associations to respect the media's work," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Targeting TV stations and forcing them to broadcast messages of any nature is unacceptable. This is a real threat to media freedom and independence. As the physical [attack on a German freelance journalist](#) on 25 November showed, events can easily get out of hand in the current fraught climate."

Reporters Without Borders added: "Everyone has a duty to guarantee a safe environment for all the media, including those that are not independent."

Anti-government demonstrators stormed into six TV stations yesterday demanding that their statements be broadcast on the air and telling the stations not to report government information. In the course of the morning, activists managed to seize control of the Bangkok headquarters of public broadcaster Thai PBS and at the same time get control of its news coverage.

The anti-government protesters entered *NBT* and *Channel 11* in Bangkok at around 11 am. All TV stations except state-owned NBT were forced to carry a statement by opposition leader Suthep Thaugsuban in a feed supplied by the opposition TV station *Blue Sky*.

Under an accord with the demonstrators, *Thai PBS* broadcast the speech in a small window on its screen, and planned to provide equal time to government representatives.

Blue Sky televised negotiations between *Thai PBS* and demonstrators in which an opposition representative said: "If you don't follow our request, we will have to black out the station. We have to. That's the only way. We can't let it be any other way." Suthep, for his part, said the TV stations had "cooperated" to relay the feed and had been "understanding."

The Thai Broadcast Journalists Association and the News Broadcasting Council of Thailand issued a joint statement condemning the demonstrations as anti-democratic and as a threat to media freedom. The statement nonetheless acknowledged that the wave of anti-government protests had received little coverage since they began.

At the same time, the Bangkok-based Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) warned that the opposition's actions posed a threat to the independence of the media and journalists.

Demonstrators nonetheless continued to target the media today.

In the northern city of Chiang Mai, around 150 members of Rak Chiang Mai, a pro-government "Red Shirt" group, marched to the local Thai PBS branch and handed in a letter calling on it not to broadcast Suthep's statements, which it said were illegal.

Shortly before the march, a Rak Chiang Mai leader warned that the group's members would set fire to any TV station continuing to broadcast Suthep's statements.

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

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