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<http://www.rsf.org/thailand-with-the-military-junta-monitoring-09-07-2014,46609.html>

Asia - Thailand

Freedom suspended

With the military junta monitoring Facebook, a political message there can put a journalist behind bars

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Thanapol Eawsakul, editor in chief magazine *Fah Diew Gan (Same Sky)*, a political magazine, was arrested after posting a message on Facebook that displeased the ruling junta. Eawsakul was released on 9 July after four days in jail. The arrest took place after Eawsakul responded to an invitation to meet military officers at a cafe. Upon arrival, he was put in custody.

Eawsakul had been [previously arrested on 23 May](#) for having participated in a peaceful demonstration opposing the military's coup d'état. On that occasion, he spent seven days in jail.

Upon his release, authorities had demanded that the journalist promise in writing to abstain from political activities that could generate social unrest. Precisely what Eawsakul wrote in the Facebook post that led to his subsequent arrest is not known. But the authorities are engaging in a widespread crackdown on social media, especially Facebook.

"It is of grave concern that the Thai army is carrying out a change of government," said Benjamin Ismail, head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk. *"Instead of government by rule of law, the junta is in charge, governing by force. Under the pretext of guaranteeing public order, the army aims to censor all criticism of the military and to discourage the press from freely expressing opinions."*

Ismail added, "The military must stop the repeated violations of freedom of information that have been underway since they took power."

Since taking over on 22 May, the junta has made clear its intention to extend control over social media. On 28 May, user access to Facebook was blocked for about one hour. On 25 June, the National Council for Peace and Order announced the [formation of committees to control media content](#), with social media a priority.

Earlier in June, the deputy chief of the metropolitan police warned that individuals who posted messages opposing the coup on social media would be considered lawbreakers, and subject to arrest. Authors of posts deemed to constitute "lèse majesté" would receive the same treatment.

Eawsakul was already known for his criticism of the "lèse majesté" law, under which a number of journalists and bloggers have been prosecuted.

Thailand is ranked 130th of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders World [Press Freedom Index](#).
