

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND THE RELEASE OF ONLINE NEWS EDITOR

Chiranuch Premchaiporn, an online news editor in Thailand, was arrested on 24 September under the country's 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act. She is being held in Khon Kaen police station in north-eastern Thailand. Chiranuch Premchaiporn is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Chiranuch Premchaiporn is the Executive Director of Prachatai (Thai People), a Thai online media portal that contains news, opinion, and a forum for discussion about current affairs in the country. Thailand's Immigration Police (Investigation and Suppression Division) arrested Chiranuch Premchaiporn on 24 September at around 2.30pm (Thailand time) at passport control in Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport. She had just arrived back in Thailand from a brief trip abroad. She was shown an arrest warrant, dated 8 September, relating to material posted on the Prachatai website in April 2008 and that, according to the warrant, endangers Thailand's national security.

This material was written and posted by an unknown Prachatai reader, not Chiranuch Premchaiporn herself. She cannot stop people from posting to the site, but can remove material once it is posted. Chiranuch Premchaiporn can be held for up to 48 days without trial under the Thai Criminal Code.

Chiranuch Premchaiporn was previously charged on 6 March 2009 with violating Sections 14 and 15 of the 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act, which relates to offences that endanger national security. She was released on bail, and is awaiting trial for those charges, which in total could lead to a 50-year prison sentence.

Chiranuch Premchaiporn's latest arrest warrant contains charges under the same sections of the Act. However, it is not clear if there are additional charges under other sections of the Act or indeed other laws.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Thai authorities to immediately release Chiranuch Premchaiporn, and drop all charges against her;
- Calling on the Thai authorities to immediately make public the full list of charges against Chiranuch Premchaiporn;
- Calling on the Thai authorities to cease censorship of websites under the 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 05 NOVEMBER 2010 TO:

Government spokesperson
Mr Panitan Wattanayagorn
Office of the Prime Minister
c/o Government House
Pitsanulok Road, Dusit District
Bangkok, 10300
THAILAND
Fax: +66 2 288 4186
E-mail: spokesman@thaigov.go.th
Salutation: Dear Mr Panitan

Prime Minister
Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva
c/o Government House
Pitsanulok Road, Dusit District
Bangkok 10300
THAILAND
Fax: +66 2 288 4016
E-mail: spokesman@thaigov.go.th or
abhisit@abhisit.org
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr Kasit Piromya
Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs
443 Sri Ayudhya Road
Bangkok 10400
THAILAND
Fax: +662 643 5318
E-mail: om@mof.go.th
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Thailand accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

DEMAND THE RELEASE OF ONLINE NEWS EDITOR

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thailand has seen a backward slide in its respect of freedom of expression in the past 18 months. The Thai government's increasing misuse of the 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act has led to a sharp increase in monitoring of the internet for *lese majeste* (insult to the monarchy) content and in blocks of over ten thousand websites. This broad-ranging censorship of websites in itself constitutes a violation of Thailand's obligations under international human rights law. The Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva acknowledged in December 2009 that there were problems with the Act's enforcement.

The Thai government has frequently used the 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act to uphold the country's *lese majeste* law in a growing trend of censorship to silence peaceful political dissent. The *lese majeste* law goes beyond reasonable restrictions on freedom of expression provided for under international human rights law.

Amnesty International is concerned with the Thai government's characterization of the *lese majeste* law as a matter of national security (and the subsequent decision in June 2009 to hold a trial of alleged *lese majeste* behind closed doors on that basis). The same argument about protection of national security is now being used to arbitrarily detain Chiranuch Premchaiporn.

UA: 210/10 Index: ASA 39/005/2010 Issue Date: 24 September 2010

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

