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## **Thailand: Release human rights defender imprisoned for insulting the monarchy**

The sentencing of a human rights defender to ten years in prison for publishing two articles allegedly insulting the monarchy is a serious setback for freedom of expression in Thailand, Amnesty International said.

The Criminal Court today found Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, a magazine editor and labour rights activist, guilty under Thailand's so-called lèse majesté law for allegedly publishing two articles defaming the royal family.

Somyot has been detained since 30 April 2011, and the authorities have repeatedly turned down his request for bail.

“This is a regressive decision – Somyot has been found guilty simply for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and should be released immediately,” said Isabelle Arradon, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director.

“We urge the authorities to release Somyot and all other prisoners of conscience without conditions. They should also grant Somyot reparations for the time he has spent in pre-trial detention.

“Authorities in Thailand have in recent years increasingly used legislation, including the lèse majesté law, to silence peaceful dissent and imprison prisoners of conscience. The lèse majesté law should immediately be suspended and revised so that it complies with Thailand's international human rights obligations.”

The lèse majesté law prohibits any word or act which “defames, insults, or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent, or the Regent” and carries up to fifteen years imprisonment for each offence. It violates the right to freedom of expression as provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Thailand ratified in 1996.