

Women step forward for Freedom of Speech in Thailand

Monday 30 April 2012, by [YIMPRASERT Junya Lek](#) (Date first published: 30 April 2012).



We choose April 30 to publish this poster for two reasons.

Arrested in March 2009 and bailed many times since, now, on April 30, Chiranuch Premchaiyaporn, the Prachatai.com Webmaster, a receiver of the 2012 Women of Courage Award, will face the verdict of a Public Prosecutor working for the Thai Computer Crime Act (2007) that was invented to control freedom of the Internet and protect the reputation of the Monarchy.

Under Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code, on 30 April 2010 Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, a well-known labour activist, was arrested, charged with *lès majesté* and jailed. Harassed and pressured by authorities attempting to force him to plead guilty, Somyot has stood firm. Eight requests for bail have been denied.

ARTICLE 19, a world-wide organisation championing freedom of expression and information, has provided us with the clearest explanation to date of how the Thai laws of *lèse majesté* violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The 18-page 'Written Comment' (24.04.2012) from ARTICLE 19 on Somyot's case concludes as follows: "On the basis of the above arguments, we respectfully submit that the Court should dismiss all charges against Mr Pruksakasemsuk and order his unconditional release from detention. In doing so, the Court should recommend that all *lèse-majesté* provisions should be constitutionally reviewed by the Thai Constitutional Court and repealed by the Thai legislature."

At the 12th AWID Forum in Istanbul (19-22 April) nearly 2500 women from 154 countries arrived with their concerns for the economic hardships of the 99%, with their stories of oppression and worries about the impacts of climate change, rising militarism and violence.

The Forum gave space to the well-being of women and to how women, as half the citizenry, can share in leading the world to a better future. The Forum gave strong recognition to the energy and

participation of the young generation and to the high level of attendance from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region).

Under the AWID Forum's theme of 'Transforming Economic Power' through the advancement of justice and women's rights, the Forum made space for LGBTQI women and men to speak, share, exhibit and act together. Many presentations talked about 'fearlessness'.

On the last day I decided to make a placard with 'NO to Article 112', charge my camera and invite friends and comrades at the 2012 AWID Forum to show support for the struggle in Thailand to abolition LM 112. To my joy I found that many already knew about LM 112, and some even came forward with 'sawasdi' and 'khob kun ka'. Women who work in organisation that are not allowed to express political views were more than happy to pose with the 'NO to Article 112' placard covering their faces.

I greatly enjoyed taking these pictures and to talking with friends of many years, and of recent years, and with all the new young faces who gathered to hold the placard. Taking hold of the placard with glee, one girl said: "This is the law that sends people to jail for stepping on a bank note . . . right?" "Tell us what else we can do."

There's 150 people on the poster. Deepest thanks to all.

On behalf of ACT4DEM.

Junya Yimprasert

P.S.

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<http://hirvikatu10.net/timeupthailand/?p=2524>