

Thailand: Lèse majesté purge erupts nationwide after the King's death

Tuesday 18 October 2016, by [PRACHATAI](#) (Date first published: 18 October 2016).

Thai police have arrested two more people accused of lèse majesté in Southern Thailand, after royalist mobs stormed a soymilk and then a roti shop to hunt for lèse majesté suspects over the weekend. Soldiers and police have also searched a house in the Northeast whose owner is accused of lèse majesté.

On 16 October 2016, police officers took a suspect accused of violating Article 112 of the Criminal Code, the lèse majesté law, to a police station in Koh Samui District of the southern province of Surat Thani.

The suspect is accused of posting Facebook messages deemed defamatory to Gen Prem Tinsulanonda, the current Regent of Thailand, and about the funeral of the late King.

According to a Facebook page called Southerners United, it took two days for the police to arrest the suspect. Locals physically assaulted her after she was arrested.

As the police brought the suspect to the police station, a large crowd of at least 100 people gathered in front of the police station and yelled abusive words to the suspect. The police had to barricade the crowd from further assaulting her.

The suspect was later ordered to prostrate in front of King Bhumibol's portrait, but the crowd was still unsatisfied.

The crowd only agreed to disperse after the police promised to proceed with legal procedures against the suspect.

"With a man's honour, the police already did our duty. Many people want police officers to arrest the suspect and we already arrested her," the police officer announced through an amplifier.

On the same day in Phuket Province, the Manager Online reported that police arrested Manorusdeen (surname withheld due to privacy concerns), from his house in Thalang District of Phuket.

The police accused him of using a Facebook account named 'Phayak Rai Haeng Nakhon Koh-ann' to post messages allegedly violating the lèse majesté law. The police also found an amphetamine pill in the suspect's house after searching his house.

The suspect has so far refused to be interrogated by the police. He is now under custody at Tha Chatchai Police Station in Phuket.

Meanwhile, in the northeastern province of Ubon Ratchathani, police officers and soldiers searched a shop selling stereo components in Warin Chamrap District.

The search was carried out after reports the shop's owner had allegedly posted Facebook messages violating the lèse majesté law.

From the search, the authorities found that the owner of the shop was illegally lending money for interest and possessed several fake documents together with imitations of firearms.

After the death of the highly respected King Bhumibol after a seven decade long reign last week, many social media users also reported that they were harassed for not wearing black.

Khaosod English reported that a well-known cartoonist Narong Jarungthamchot, who goes by his penname Kuat Kaihuaror, wrote online that two diners at a restaurant had hissed at him for wearing grey striped shirt on 15 October. "Evil, he's probably not a Thai, look at his shirt," Narong quoted one of them as saying.

One eyewitness in Bangkok also reported that on 15 October, he saw a pickup truck driver shouting at a messenger on a motorcycle during a traffic jam on Ratchadamnoen Avenue for not wearing black, Khaosod English added in the report.

The controversial Article 112 of the Criminal Code, or the lèse majesté law, states that anyone who "defames, insults or threatens the king, the queen, the heir-apparent or the regent" shall be punished with up to 15 years in prison.

Many people have argued that wording of the law does not protect the late monarch. Given the hyper-royalist environment and tremendous grief that many Thai people are sharing after the recent death of King Bhumibol, many people fear that the law will be interpreted more widely.

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* Prachatai. Mon, 17/10/2016 - 10:20. :

<http://prachatai.org/english/node/6657>

Auntie with mental illness slapped for allegedly insulting passed King

Despite standing next to a police officer, an auntie with a mental illness has been heavily slapped across her face for allegedly insulting King Bhumibol.

Since 17 October 2016, Thai social media has been sharing a video clip of an elderly woman being scorned on a public bus. In the clip, the auntie does not say anything but surrounding passengers force her to leave the bus, alleging that she insulted King Bhumibol Adulyadej who passed away on 13 October.

After walking down from the bus with a police officer, a lady on the street heavily slaps her on the face.

"Assault!" the auntie says immediately.

The police, however, do not make any effort to arrest the lady who slapped her. The officer asks for evidence that she really insulted the king but none of the passengers have proof. The officer then lets the auntie walk away.

After the video was widely shared, people who witnessed the incident stated that the auntie was

likely mentally ill. Some witnesses also shared a photo of the auntie urinating on the bus.

“She is mentally ill. I was on the same bus with her. She talked to herself, but acted like she was talking to somebody, and laughed out [so loudly],” read one account.

Another witness said that the auntie did not mention the passed King but was actually talking about a king in a Thai soap opera.

“I listened to her and it turned out that she mentioned a king in a soap, a king of the underworld or something,” read an anonymous post.

The clip was originally shared by the Facebook account Mai K. Phakaporn but was later removed.

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* Prachatai. Mon, Tue, 18/10/2016 - 12:06:

<http://prachatai.org/english/node/6660>
