

Killing in the Name of Thailand's King
February 3, 2012
By Pavin Chachavalpongpun

Hyper-royalists on a rampage

The Thai hyper-royalists say they will kill in the name of the King.

The royalists have launched a vicious campaign against a group of law professors from the esteemed Thammasat University, calling themselves *Nitirat* or “law for the people.” The Nitirat have proposed an immediate amendment to the anachronistic lèse-majesté law. These hyper-royalists have accused the Nitirat of attempting to overthrow the monarchy, a dire crime in Thailand.

They have launched a stunning catalogue of threats against the Nitirat. As unveiled by Elizabeth Fitzgerald in her recent article in *New Mandala*, among them is a plan to urge the military to stage a coup in order to defend the monarchy from the so-called traitors. But perhaps the hyper-royalists forgot that it was the coup of 2006 that stirred up anti-monarchy sentiment in the first place.

At the forefront of the witch-hunt is the yellow-shirt People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD), known for its acts of seizing the Government House and Suvarnabhumi Airport in 2008. Supporters of the PAD have demanded that the military to abduct members of the Nitirat or throw them from helicopters. They have called for names, addresses, phone numbers and maps of the house locations of the Nitirat members to be published. They wanted the members to be necklaced and burned alive in front of their houses.

They suggested that these law professors be beheaded and their heads put on stakes outside the front of the entrance to Thammasat University. They also said they hoped that the leader of the Nitirat, Dr Worachet Pakeerut, would be executed.

Joining the hyper-royalists in their malicious campaign are leading personalities in the government and academic community in Thailand. Army Chief General Prayuth Chan-ocha branded Nitirat’s law professors “mentally ill people” while urging them to leave the country because of their disrespect for the monarchy. Meanwhile, members of the opposition Democrat Party launched a vicious war of words.

“These law professors are the scum of the earth”, said Chavanond Indarakomartsut, deputy spokesman of the Democrat Party.

The Yingluck Shinawatra government, which rose to power thanks to its red-shirt supporters, has made clear its position to not amend the lèse-majesté law.

Deputy Prime Minister Chalerm Yubamrung said: “My party will never change this law. I will also oppose anyone who proposes that it is changed”.

In the last week, the Rector of Thammasat University, Somkit Lertpaitoon, has issued a ban of lèse-majesté discussions within the walls of the university. Somkit, who served on the constitution drafting committees during the junta-led Surayud Chulanont government (2006-

2008) and therefore forging intimate ties with the army, was immediately attacked by pro-democracy groups. Somkit is a disgrace to the university, set up on the aspiration of Pridi Banomyong, former prime minister, who was the leader of civilian factions carrying out a coup that ended the absolute monarchy in 1932.

But the Nitirat is not the only victim in this vicious political game. Abhinya Sawatvarakorn, nicknamed Kantoop, or “Joss Stick”, a 19-year-old student at Thammasat University, will be charged with lèse-majesté over comments she made on Facebook two years ago. Kantoop was accused of committing lèse-majesté in April 2009 while she was still in high school.

She will be one of the youngest ever to be charged under the law. She has already been through a catalogue of “social punishments”. She was refused admission into Silpakorn University where some professors reportedly called her a traitor. Her own family rejected her and stopped financing her study. She had a shoe thrown at her by a monarchist and has been forced to change her name to avoid being recognized and possibly attacked.

At 9.30 am, on 11 February 2012, Kantoop will report to a police officer at Bang Kane police station after receiving a police call regarding the lèse majesté charge. Simultaneously, there will be a protest by a group of Thammasat students in front of the police station.

Panitan “Tai” Pruksakasemsuk is planning a hunger strike to demand justice for his father, Somyot Pruksakasemsuk, a well-known labour activist who has been imprisoned during a trial of lèse majesté charge since April 2011. The court has not allowed Somyot bail although the trial process has not yet finished.

Tai will begin a hunger strike for 112 hours, the number resembling to Article 112. The hunger strike will start from 4.00 pm on Feb. 11 until 8 am on Feb. 16—totalling four and a half days. The hunger strike will take place at Suvarnabhumi Airport. He said that his protest will be held peacefully and will not affect the airport's operation.

On Feb. 14 also Valentine’s Day, a special event “Love for Justice” will be organised. Thammasat students and groups of activists will offer flower to Tai, as part of commemorating all victims of the article 112. After the end of the hunger strike, Tai will attend the hearing of his father’s seventh request for bail at Criminal Court Ratchada on the same day.

Copyright © 2005 - 2012 Asia Sentinel.

Source: http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4198&Itemid=185