



Urgent Appeal from Protection International Thailand: Monitoring the Pattani Provincial Court Verdict on human rights defender and Citizen Journalist Asmadee Buheang

Charged with Resisting and Obstructing Officials While Reporting on an Extrajudicial Killing

Verdict Date: February 24, 2025

Protection International Thailand urgently calls upon the **United Nations, diplomatic missions, international human rights bodies, and media freedom advocates** to closely monitor the upcoming verdict in the case of **Asmadee Buheang**, a **citizen journalist and human rights defender** based in Thailand's Deep South. His trial raises **serious concerns about press freedom, the criminalization of human rights defenders, and access to justice in conflict-affected areas.**

Asmadee is **facing charges of resisting and obstructing officials** while reporting on an extrajudicial killing. Despite the charges, he remains steadfast in **defending his right to report and document human rights violations.** His case is emblematic of **broader threats to press freedom and civic space in Thailand**, particularly in the **Deep South**, where ongoing restrictions limit independent reporting on state actions.

Concerns About the Trial Process and Criminalization of Citizen Journalists

- **Flawed Prosecution Case:** The defense was taken aback when a **prosecution witness** admitted to **misidentifying the individual who allegedly attempted to slap them—it was not Asmadee.**
- **Criminalization of Journalism:** Asmadee was conducting his **legitimate work as a journalist and human rights defender**, documenting an **extrajudicial killing** to report on human rights abuses.
- **Violation of International Norms:** Asmadee's prosecution **directly contradicts Thailand's international commitments to freedom of expression, press freedom, and human rights protection**, particularly under **Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and the **1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.**

Background of the Case

Between **December 11-13, 2024**, the **Pattani Provincial Court** heard witness testimonies from both the **prosecution and defense.** The charges, brought by the **Thai state**, accuse **Asmadee and Ms. Maeda Sani** (mother of the deceased) of:

- **Resisting or obstructing officials** in the performance of their duties.

- **Using force or threats of violence** while retrieving the body of Maeda's son, who was **extrajudicially killed** in a security operation.

The case is being prosecuted under **Sections 83, 138, and 140 of the Thai Penal Code**, as well as **Order No. 41 of the Revolutionary Council (1976)**.

Asmadee's Defense: Upholding Press Freedom and the Right to Report

Asmadee is a **well-respected citizen journalist and human rights defender** specializing in **civil and political rights, environmental issues, and state violence in the Deep South**. He remains resolute:

"I was there solely to observe and document the situation for my reports. I have been doing this work consistently. Despite being accused and prosecuted, I will fight this case to the end to prove my innocence. I have never violated the law as alleged."

Asmadee emphasized that **freedom of expression in conflict zones is a fundamental right** and that he has consistently denied all charges since the early stages of the investigation.

"Even as I fight this case, I will continue my work as a citizen journalist. Reporting in conflict areas like the Deep South is crucial, especially since martial law remains in effect. People have the right to access complete and accurate information."

International and Diplomatic Concern: Citizen Journalism Under Threat

Former **Senator Thewarit Maneechai**, former executive editor of **Prachatai**, testified as a defense witness, affirming that Asmadee has worked as a journalist **for years, covering human rights violations and community struggles**.

"The criminalization of citizen journalists will only further restrict independent reporting in Thailand, particularly in conflict zones. Suppressing press freedom reduces transparency and weakens democracy."

Senator Thewarit **warned that** the prosecution of journalists **contradicts Thailand's obligations under international human rights law**:

- **Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** guarantees **freedom of expression and access to information**.
- **Section 34 of Thailand's 2017 Constitution** affirms the right to communication and media freedom.
- **UNESCO and global human rights bodies** recognize press freedom as fundamental to democratic governance.

Defense Attorney: Prosecution's Case is Unfounded

Asmadee's legal counsel, Human Rights Lawyer, Athiwat Sengkhui, underscored that **key evidence contradicts the charges**:

- ✓ A prosecution witness admitted they misidentified the suspect.
- ✓ Video evidence from the scene proves that Asmadee did not engage in any unlawful actions.

Human Rights Organizations: Thailand Must Protect Human Rights Defenders

Pranom Somwong from **Protection International** has closely monitored the case and warns that it represents a **broad pattern of judicial harassment** against **human rights defenders and citizen journalists**.

“Their rights are protected under the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which obligates states to protect individuals working to uphold human dignity and justice.”

She also highlighted the **long history of impunity in Thailand's Deep South**, where cases like the **Tak Bai massacre** have eroded trust in the justice system.

“We urge the Thai judiciary to uphold the presumption of innocence and ensure a fair trial in accordance with international human rights standards.”

UN and Diplomatic Community Action Needed

As the **Pattani Provincial Court** prepares to issue its verdict on **February 24, 2025**, **Protection International Thailand** **urges the international community to take action**:

🔊 **We call on the UN, diplomatic missions, and international human rights organizations to:**

1. **Closely monitor the trial proceedings and final verdict** to ensure compliance with international legal standards.
2. **Publicly express concern** over the criminalization of Asmadee and the implications for press freedom in Thailand.
3. **Urge the Thai government to uphold its commitments under international human rights treaties**, including protections for journalists and human rights defenders.
4. **Engage in diplomatic dialogue with Thai authorities** to advocate for Asmadee's right to a fair trial and the broader protection of civic space.

International Human Rights Mechanisms Have Already Raised Concerns

The **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders**, together with other **UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders**, has sent an **official communication to the Thai government**, raising **serious concerns** over the prosecution of Asmadee.

✦ The UN communication is now **publicly available** and can be accessed here:

🔗 [OHCHR Special Procedures Communication on Asmadee Buheang](#)

Verdict Announcement: February 24, 2025, at 10:00 AM

Asmadee's case is a **litmus test** for Thailand's commitment to **press freedom, human rights, and access to justice**. The **international community's vigilance and advocacy** are crucial in **ensuring due process and preventing further restrictions on civic space in Thailand**.

🔊 We urge all stakeholders to stand in solidarity with Asmadee and citizen journalists facing repression worldwide.