

Isaan writers, students express solidarity with activists charged after Harry Potter-themed protest

written by กองบรรณาธิการ | August 9, 2020

Cover image by Thai Lawyers for Human Rights

KHON KAEN - After a human rights lawyer and a leader of the recent pro-democracy protests were arrested and accused of several charges, Isaan student activists and a group of writers issued statements of solidarity.

Khon Kaen University student activist group "[Enough is Enough](#)" and the Ubon Ratchathani-based writers' group Northeastern Writers for Democracy (NEW4D) issued separate statements on social media on Friday and Saturday.

"[We] are calling on all relevant authorities to immediately release the activists who are being unjustly prosecuted, and to stop harassing people who only express their political opinions," reads the statement of the student group published on Friday.

The statement of NEW4D calls the arrests a "violation of the freedom of expression which is a basic right of all citizens in a democracy."

Lawyer [Anon Nampa](#) and student leader [Panupong Jadnok](#) were arrested on Friday evening and released the next day. They stand accused of several charges, including sedition, violation of the emergency decree, and organizing an assembly intended to commit acts of violence.



Anon Nampa (white shirt), who works for the organization, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, and Ramkhamhaeng University student Panupong Jadnok (black tshirt) were detained at the Huai Khwang Police Station in Bangkok on August 7. Photo by [Wong Shi Shp](#)

The arrests came after a [protest on August 3](#) in which Anon, dressed as Harry Potter, delivered a speech calling for open discussion about and monarchy and reform of the institution. The speech touched on several sensitive issues related to the monarch and the funding of the institution.

“If we don’t talk about this issue, there is no way to solve the problem,” [Anon told the crowd at Democracy Monument in Bangkok](#). “Talking like this is not overthrowing the monarchy, but it is for the monarchy to exist in Thai society with legitimacy in accordance with the democratic system of government with the monarch as head of state.”

“From now on, no one else who speaks about the monarchy should be accused of being mad, of being insane, or carried off to the hospital even though they are speaking the truth,” Anon said, referring to the [recent case of a Khon Kaen man](#) who was admitted to a mental hospital after wearing a shirt with the slogan, “I lost faith in the institution of the monarchy.”

However, [according to the police](#) the arrests on Friday were not related to the Harry Potter-themed event but to the student movement’s large protest [on July 18 in Bangkok](#).



Anon dressed as Harry Potter at a protest on August 3 at Bangkok's Democracy Monument. Photo by [Prachatai](#).

Meanwhile there [have been reports](#) that the authorities are preparing to charge another 29 members of the protest movement including prominent Isaan activist and [former lèse majesté prisoner Jatapat Boonpattaraksa](#).

"We'd like to ask all relevant authorities if people's freedom of expression is still in place," the statement of the Khon Kaen student group reads. "Do the people in this country still have the freedom to express their opinions based on facts, or not? Do the police, the military, and the authorities ever consider their role at all?"

The arrests of the two men and the news about more expected charges against members of the pro-democracy movement fueled more protests on Saturday evening in [Buriram](#) and at [Bangkok's Siam Skywalk](#).