

# Isaan academics sign petition condemning use of Section 112

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ISAAN - In the past few days, academics teaching in Isaan were invited to sign a statement in the name of the Isaan Academics for Democracy group to end the government's use of violence and urging it to stop using Section 112 of the criminal code to silence its critics. The group, in supporting the student movement, also urged the government to allow the leaders of the People's Party to receive bail and for them to be released.

The statement of the Isaan Academics for Democracy group said in its statement that Section 112 of the Criminal Code states that "anyone who defames, insults, or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent shall be punished with imprisonment from three to fifteen years." This law has been used by the state as a tool to curb those who have different political views. Over the last number of years, there have been many people questioning the monarchy's role in politics who have been threatened by the authorities and prosecuted unjustly under this law.

The court has refused bail for five of those charged for violating Section 112. They are: Anon Nampa, Prit Chivarak (Penguin), Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, Patiwat Saraiyam (Molam Bank), and Anchan Prilert, a former official of the Revenue Department. In refusing bail, the court said, "There is reason to believe that if released temporarily while awaiting trial, these suspects might cause dangerous incidents or damage in some other way, or there was reason to believe that they might escape."

The statement goes on to say that when protesters in Bangkok demanded the court allow bail to those held on February 13, 2021, various news agencies reported that the police used violence to disperse protesters, injuring many and putting them in danger.

The Isaan Academics for Democracy group condemns state violence and issues the following demands:

1. We call on the state to stop harassing activists and to end the use of Article 112 of the Criminal Code against people who have differing political opinions. Such actions further divide society and undermine the stability and credibility of the monarchy, as the law allows broad interpretation which leads to more prosecutions. The law allows anyone to make accusations and the proceedings of cases are not open to the public. More importantly, use of the law violates the rights and freedom of the people to express their opinions. Prosecutions of people under Section 112 also puts the monarchy in an unfavorable light in the eyes of the world

2. We call for an end of detention of those accused under Section 112 without allowing the right to bail when they have not been convicted of the crime. By failing to grant bail, the accused is put into a position of assumed guilt. Failure to grant bail is even more likely to lead to further political conflict in the future.

3. We condemn violence exercised by government officials. We call on the state to stop using violence against protesters and to take responsibility for the violence that occurred in the recent dispersal of protesters. The use of violence from government officials is not a solution to the conflict. It will only compound the problem even more. This is despite the fact that the protests so far have been based on peaceful means. The use of violence to end protests is not justified.

Members of the Isaan Academics for Democracy group are joining the Khong Chi Mun Network protest in Khon Kaen today (February 20th, 2021).

Signatories include:

1. Narasith Vongprasert, Ubon Ratchathani University
2. Saowanee T. Alexander, Ubon Ratchathani University
3. Thanom Chapakdee, Khong-Chi-Mun Basin art practitioner
4. Phongthep Bunkla, scholar
5. Teerapon Anmai, Ubon Ratchathani University
6. Thawat Maneephong, Ubon Ratchathani University
7. Pasit P Wongngamdee, Ubon Ratchathani University
8. Patawee Chotanan, Ubon Ratchathani University
9. Piyanut Singkaew, Ubon Ratchathani University
10. Jira Smyth, Ubon Ratchathani University
11. Nattchawal Pocapanishwong, Ubon Ratchathani University
12. Chantha Thanawattanawong, Ubon Ratchathani University

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