



Royal Thai Embassy
111 Empire Circuit,
Yarralumla 2600, Canberra, ACT.
Tel. +61 2 6206 0100 Fax. +61 2 6206 0123

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Editor,

I can assure you that Thais are very much saddened and angered by Peter Hartcher's article "Scheming king unwilling to stop the violence on Bangkok streets", published in your newspaper today. It is an abuse of the freedom of speech pure and simple.

Hartcher is certainly not an expert on Thailand. He started by referring to "the political crisis of 1992" in which "Thai troops moved to confront tens of thousands of protesters on a Bangkok university campus". But the said confrontation took place in 1976, and the confrontation in 1992 was at another location outside any university campus! Hartcher then proceeded to base his assumptions that the much-discredited book by Paul Handley accurately informs its readers about what the Thai monarchy is all about, which is not true at all. With these wrong premises, Hartcher assails the Thai monarchy in every way imaginable, in the way that ex-Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra himself would oppose, as Thaksin has repeatedly professed in public his deep and highest respect for His Majesty the King even now. And Hartcher is wrong again in saying that the King "has not named a successor and there is no right of succession in Thai law". HRH the Crown Prince has been named Heir to the throne many decades ago, and our Constitution expressly stipulates who will succeed the King. Why should your readers believe an ignorant writer like Hartcher, who is lucky enough to earn his living as "the international editor of the *Herald*"?

As a constitutional monarch, His Majesty the King is above politics and He could intercede to give advice only when He would not be seen as getting involved in Thai political struggles to achieve a political victory for one side, and He certainly would not intercede for His own personal benefits or for the gains of those surrounding Him.

The Thai royal family does not bring law suits to protect the honour and reputation of Their Majesties the King and the Queen or the heir to the throne. Thailand's *lèse-majesté* law is there to protect them and a national committee has been set up to scrutinize its implementation so as to prevent any abuse in the enforcement of that law. Your caricature of His Majesty that accompanies the article is in an extremely bad taste indeed. It shows how insensitive your newspaper is to the feeling of Thais. For Thais, nationhood, religions, and the monarchy are the three main pillars of the Thai nation. With the respect, admiration and reverence accorded by Thais to His Majesty through His 64 years of extremely hard work for the betterment of all persons living on Thai soil, especially those underprivileged Thais living in far remote corners of the realm, the institution of the Thai monarchy has become sacred for grateful Thais, and its insult, including drawing caricatures to depict the monarchy in a negative light, would be comparable to a religious sacrilege, which is a serious criminal offence in every civilized nation. Besides, Hartcher has no right to brand someone whom he does not know or understand well a "thug". Maybe he is surrounded by "thugs", "Machiavellis" and those sorts of persons throughout his journalist career so he makes a Freudian slip by imagining that other people covered by his stories should be like them, too.

Hartcher is blind to the fact that there are armed *agents provocateurs* in hiding and shooting at innocent people and law enforcement officers in protest areas in Bangkok. That is why

Editor,

The Sydney Morning Herald,

SYDNEY.

"army snipers" have to "take aim" to prevent these armed elements from inflicting further injuries

and instigating prolonged unrest. The Thai army and police must abide by applicable rules on the use of forces and firearms, otherwise the officers concerned and their superiors whoever they are will be held individually accountable under Thai criminal law. Probably, the restricted access by news reporters to the areas controlled by the *agents provocateurs* allows the news to be reported and seen only from where the Thai officers are situated. The willingness of the Royal Thai Government to allow reporters to continue their work in the areas of confrontation shows how transparent we are in the enforcement of the rule of law to bring peace to the Thai society. Impartial observers should tell your readers that “army snipers” do not “take aim at unarmed civilians and murder them in the streets...”, as alleged by Hartcher.

Conspicuously absent from the article by Hartcher is his condemnation of the unreasonable, or virtually impossible, demand from the hardliners of the Red Shirts in response to the Thai Prime Minister’s 5-point reconciliation package to end the on-going confrontation and to move Thailand into the future as a society living in harmony irrespective of any political affiliation or leaning each Thai citizen might have.

In all, your readers have a good reason to suspect that Hartcher is one of the spin doctors hired by the opponents of the Thai monarchy and the present democratically elected Royal Thai Government to unjustifiably undermine their standing and reputation in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Yours sincerely,

(Kriangsak Kittichaisaree)
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand