

12 December 2025

**LAWASIA STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON THE INDICTMENT OF AUSTRALIAN WRITER
AND BLOGGER MURRAY HUNTER**

LAWASIA expresses concern at the indictment by Thai authorities of Australian writer and blogger Mr. Murray Hunter, for allegedly defaming the Malaysian Government.

Between April and November 2024, Mr. Hunter, a long-time resident of Thailand, posted four articles on 'Substack', an online media platform.¹ In his articles, Mr. Hunter accused the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) of '*abusing its power, censoring and blocking websites critical of the government, and alleged its chair held a conflict of interest*'.² The MCMC pursued a civil case against Mr. Hunter for defamation in Malaysia, and this was decided in its favour on 15 October 2025 by the Shah Alam High Court.³

In the meanwhile, the MCMC filed a criminal defamation case in Thailand, with an arrest warrant being issued on 27 March 2025 against Mr. Hunter. He was subsequently arrested on 29 September 2025 at the Suvarnabhumi Airport by the Thai police, while attempting to leave the country.

Mr. Hunter was detained for 24 hours before being released on bail; his passport has been confiscated and he is not permitted to leave Thailand. He is due to face trial from 21 December 2025; if convicted, he faces a two-year prison sentence. LAWASIA notes that the case against Mr. Hunter has been described by the Thai Lawyers for Human Rights as a transnational 'Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation' (SLAPP).⁴ LAWASIA also notes the statement by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand in this regard.⁵

A free and independent media is essential for any democracy to function effectively. Mr. Hunter's indictment is bound to have a chilling effect on freedom of speech and political

¹ https://murrayhunter.substack.com/p/how-the-mcmc-has-become-the-most?utm_source=publication-search

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/nov/20/australian-murray-hunter-journalist-academic-trial-over-alleged-criminal-defamation-of-malaysian-government>

³ <https://www.thaienquirer.com/62920/fcct-calls-for-charges-to-be-dropped-in-defamation-cases-against-australian-writer-murray-hunter/>

⁴ <https://tlhr2014.com/en/archives/79761>

⁵ <https://www.fccthai.com/news/fcct-statement-on-the-indictment-of-murray-hunter>

expression. It also sets a potential precedent for the transnational weaponizing of criminal defamation laws against journalists.

LAWASIA calls upon the relevant authorities in Malaysia and Thailand to withdraw all charges against Mr. Hunter and recommit to ensuring a free and independent media. LAWASIA also urges the MCMC, a regulator and public authority, to reconsider its use of defamation laws in respect of criticisms levelled against it. LAWASIA also urges the MCMC, a regulator and public authority, to reconsider its use of defamation laws in respect of criticisms levelled against it. In this regard, it draws attention to General Comment No 34, issued by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, to the effect that defamation laws should not be used by the State parties to prevent or punish criticism of government.⁶



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⁶ United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No 34, Article 19: Freedoms of opinion and expression, <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/gc34.pdf>