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Protection International welcomes the decision by the Military officers to withdraw their criminal complaints against **citizen journalist Mr. Sarayuth Ritthipin and community and land rights defender Mr. Chadet (Jadet) Kaewsin.**

Alleged defamation, Libel and computer-related violations against government authorities.

Protection International welcomes the decision taken by the military authorities to withdraw their claims against Human Rights Defenders. On the 11th December 2016 statement referring to Lieutenant Roengchinjarun Woothisarn and Police Lieutenant Colonel Chansak Sutaroang, deputy director for investigation, HRDs **Sarayuth Ritthipin and Chadet (Jadet) Kaewsin** were informed in writing that they will not be prosecuted.

The case regards a complaint that the 2nd Infantry Division, of the 8th Infantry Regiment filed against both human rights defenders on 3rd October 2016 for two allegations, *i.e.* libel offence and secondly for 'bringing into a computer system false or forged information, partly or as a whole', under Thailand's Computer Crimes Act.

They had been summoned on 17th October 2016 from the Chum Phae Police Station in Khon Kaen city, E-san region for libel and computer-related violations against government authorities.

The human rights defenders were accused of posting a news article on the website, titled "Military raided home asking to meet Phu Pha Man land activists".

The news article was written by **Sarayuth Ritthipi for E-san Land Reform News Agency**. In a meeting to the governor on 22nd October 2016, Chadet Kaewsin had stated that he had not written anything defamatory against the military on his Facebook, and had reaffirmed his position during military and police house visits conducted in August 2016.

We welcome the decision taken to withdraw the legal actions against Chadet Kaewsin and Sarayuth Ritthipin and we continue to support their legitimate and peaceful work in defense of human rights.

More on HRDs Background

Chadet Kaewsin a land rights defender and para legal volunteer part of E-san Land Reform network who helps villagers of landless communities in E-san to gain access to legal services in order to defend

their land rights. He is campaigning against the use of cabinet resolution on mapping of land location which will make his community lose their rights to land under the reforest policy launched by NCPO since July 2014. Sarayuth Rittipin is a land rights defender and a news reporter of E-san Land Reform News Agency. This news agency actively reports on the human rights campaigns of landless communities in E-san, Northeastern Thailand. The E-san community has been affected by continued land redistribution and relocation programs since 1963. The Forest Protection policy which was announced in 2014 by the junta government on the reclamation and restoration of protected areas nationwide has led to roughly 1800 families in E-san being accused of land encroachment.

Both Chadet and Sarayuth have been working tirelessly in the search for their comrade Mr. Den Kamlae. Since 2015 Den Kamlae has been leading the network of local villagers who have been trying to re-establish their rights over their land. He was last seen on 16 April 2016 in the custody of local authorities, and to date the whereabouts of Mr Den Kamlae remain unknown.

The junta government continues to intimidate, arrest, and forcibly evict people in E-san. In this context, judicial harassment is seen as one of the strategies used to counter attack the peaceful and democratic actions of human rights defenders.