



26 November 2025

Senator The Hon Penny Wong  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Australia

Parliamentary Office  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: [senator.wong@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.wong@aph.gov.au)

**Murray Hunter: Australian writer detained in Thailand**

Dear Senator Wong

PEN Melbourne, PEN Perth and PEN Sydney are three Australian chapters of PEN International, the worldwide organisation representing writers and defending freedom of expression. We write to convey our serious concerns about Australian writer Murray Hunter, currently detained (his passport has been confiscated) and on bail in Thailand, and to urge your advocacy on his behalf to the Malaysian government.

Murray Hunter was indicted on criminal defamation charges by Bangkok's Criminal Court in Thailand on 17 November 2025 at the request of Malaysian authorities. His court case in Thailand is based on a complaint filed at Yannawa Police Station by a representative of Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), which accuses Hunter of defaming the regulator in a series of Substack articles published between 13 and 29 April 2024.

PEN International regards the Malaysian government's criminal defamation charges against Mr Hunter – pursued and then taken to court in Thailand – as a serious case of transnational repression and one that could set a disturbing precedent in the region. The regulator had also previously filed a separate police complaint in Malaysia, resulting in the Shah Alam High Court reportedly finding Hunter liable for civil defamation on 15 October 2025. Hunter states that he had not been notified of the case prior to the judgement and had not received any official documents related to the proceedings, raising serious questions over whether it is a judgement on the merits.

Senator, we note your recent high level meeting with the Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan on 12 September 2025, and your joint acknowledgement of the strong bilateral relations between Australia and Malaysia, making this an appropriate time to raise the case of Murray Hunter with Minister Mohamad Hasan.

We believe the grounds for your advocacy of Murray Hunter are strong as he is an Australian citizen whose Substack articles were published in the public interest. As you know, Malaysia is the current Chair of ASEAN and as such is committed to upholding the principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, in particular

*respect for and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance.*

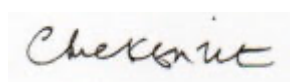
Progressing criminal defamation charges against an individual for their public interest commentaries, and having them carried out in another country, in our view, does not align with the tenets of ASEAN membership.

Senator, we understand that this request comes at the close of the parliamentary year. However, as you well know support and advocacy for Australian citizens in unsafe situations does not take a holiday. We urge you to do the following:

- give serious consideration to the details of Murray Hunter's case
- advocate for him via your strong diplomatic relationship with your Malaysian counterpart
- insist that the charges against Murray Hunter are dropped immediately, and
- take any actions that will allow Mr Hunter to leave Thailand without further charge.

The Australian PEN centres are keen to support you in this advocacy. We look forward to your response as soon as possible. Furthermore, please let us know how we can best work with you on this serious case of injustice faced by an Australian citizen in our region.

With our sincere regards



Chris McKenzie  
President  
PEN Melbourne



Krishna Sen  
President  
PEN Perth



Mansour Razaghi  
Writers in Prison  
Committee  
PEN Sydney



Ross Holder  
Head of Asia/ Pacific  
Region  
PEN International

#### **Additional information:**

<https://www.pen-international.org/news/malaysia-thailand-australian-writer-murray-hunter-targeted-in-act-of-transnational-repression>

Murray Hunter is an established independent journalist, writer and former academic, whose commentary on governance and politics in Malaysia have been regularly featured in Malaysian news outlets, including [Free Malaysia Today](#) and [Malay Mail](#). In addition to his self-published [Substack newsletter](#), Hunter is also the author of several books on Malaysia's history, economy and politics. In apparent retaliation for the critical nature of some of his blog posts, access to Hunter's Substack was blocked in Malaysia for [several months in October 2023](#).

PEN International has long [denounced](#) the use of criminal defamation charges and SLAPPs to silence and harass writers and journalists worldwide. PEN International opposes criminal defamation in all cases and urges the repeal of all criminal defamation and insult laws. The organisation further condemns the growing use of SLAPPs, which have become a significant threat to media freedom and advocacy rights, and calls upon all governments to adopt meaningful anti-SLAPP measures.