

Mother's tears at son's arrest

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Greek Australian writer Harry Nicolaides is languishing in a Thai jail after being arrested for his uncompromising descriptions of the Thai Royal Family in a book he published three years ago. NKEE talks to members of his family who express their anguish and exasperation over Harry's detention and plead for his release.

Harry Nicolaides' mother, Despina, expressed her anguish to NKEE over her son's arrest: "My eyes are constantly soaked with tears." Greek Australian Harry Nicolaides, an ex-staff writer for Neos Kosmos English Edition (NKEE), was arrested in Thailand two Sundays ago for allegedly committing crimes against the country's royal family. The charges relate to a book published by Harry three years ago titled, *Verisimilitude*. A contrite Harry explained from jail that he didn't mean to offend the royal family or the Thai people. "I want to immediately apologise to the royal family for my reckless choice of words," said former NKEE writer to The Australian correspondent in Bangkok, Peter Alford who visited him in jail.

Harry described the difficult conditions in the Bangkok Remand Centre and expressed his fear that his health was in imminent danger.

Harry's mother said to NKEE, "Harry spoke to me on the day he was arrested and said he was sorry he couldn't make it home because he was held up with work and had to stay there; he did not tell me that he was arrested, so as not to worry me."

Harry Nicolaides was arrested in Bangkok on August 31 on possible lese majeste (crimes against the crown). Lengthy prison terms up to 15 years can be imposed for insulting the monarch and his family. Harry was refused bail and was remanded in custody.

Harry Nicolaides' largely unknown self-published book *Verisimilitude* is a commentary on the political and social life of contemporary Thailand. A press release for the book describes the work as an "uncompromising assault on the patrician values of the monarchy."

An excerpt from *Verisimilitude* reads: "From King Rama to the Crown Prince, the nobility was renowned for their romantic entanglements and intrigues. The Crown Prince had many wives, major and minor, with a coterie of concubines for entertainment. One of his recent wives was exiled with her entire family, including a son they conceived together, for an undisclosed indiscretion."

Harry has asserted that this passage was misquoted because he didn't specify which King Rama he meant. Apparently an arrest warrant for Harry was issued in March but he maintains he had no knowledge of the warrant.

The Australian Embassy in Bangkok has recommended a list of lawyers for Harry. NKEE's sources in Thailand, who wish to remain anonymous, have suggested that the arrest of Harry is in part the Thai Government's attempt to show their unwavering allegiance to the Royal Family at a time of civil unrest. This assertion has been underscored on blog sites such as bohemians.com: "A time of heightened political tensions in Thailand, with rumour, political censorship, strikes, protests, a state of emergency and the government barely functioning is not a good time for this rather odd fellow to be arrested on charges of offending the Monarchy, the one Thai institution all



A recent photo of Harry Nicolaides taken while he was working as a staff writer at Neos Kosmos English Edition.

sides claim to be loyal to above all else. Talk of a nationalist military coup in the air does not help."

Dr Damien Kingsbury, an expert on Asia from Deakin University commenting on the charges brought against Harry stressed to NKEE: "My view is that lese majeste is a restriction on freedom of speech on that most relevant if archaic of political matters; the continuation of a monarchy. The royal family should not, in anything resembling a genuine democracy, be above criticism for either their personal behaviour or their political role. Indeed the very existence of the Thai royal family should be a legitimate subject of discussion and debate."

It should be noted that MPs Maria Vamvakinou and Steve Georganas and Senator Nick Xenophon have indicated to NKEE that they will pursue this matter with Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith. Harry's brother left for Thailand yesterday to coordinate efforts for Harry's release.

Article from Neos Kosmos

Mothers may be factor for teen computer addicts

COMPUTER use is the latest type of "substance abuse" among Australian teenagers - and over-protective mothers may unwittingly be causing the problem, according to research.

A study of 178 teens found those addicted to computers were more likely to have mothers who closely monitored their computer use and regularly intervened.

Problem computer users were also likely to

be very driven and seek rewards.

One in five boys and one in 10 girls use computers for more than two hours a day, according to the study, published in the latest *Australian Journal of Psychology*.

The research also found girls were more likely to use computers for music and chat, whereas boys were more likely to use them for games.

The greatest amount of problem computer use was associated with older boys who reported greater control by their mothers.

"Perhaps mothers monitor computer use behaviour more carefully than fathers . . . and intervene more readily when the behaviour appears to interfere with other responsibilities, thereby arousing conflict," authors Glynis Giles and Ian Robert Price say in the article.

They also suggest children with controlling mothers may turn to the computer "as a way of retreating or escaping the control".

The study also found that five of the 178 youths admitted using the internet for online gambling.

The authors say warning signs of addiction

or problem computer use include withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and behavioural problems in relation to computer use.

Despite their findings, they conclude: "Addiction to computer use would be difficult in a family situation where the parents closely monitor behaviour and intervene when such behaviour appears excessive".

Yesterday, John Martino, of Victoria University, said problem computer use was more prevalent among students from elite schools who had the technology for prolonged access.

He is working on a project assessing the way 60 Victorian teens use the virtual world game *Teen Second Life*.

He said some teens were such heavy users it ate into their time for homework, friends and family.

"Kids who are disengaged with the traditional curriculum are more engaged with these type of games," Dr Martino said.

"But in their minds there is no negativity associated with what they are doing."

Article from Melbourne Sun

