

## How long before 'fake news libel' becomes commonplace?

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The Guardian [reports this morning](#) that:

*One of the Philippines' most prominent journalists, [Maria Ressa](#), is facing up to six years in prison after she was found guilty on Monday of "cyber libel" charges, a verdict condemned as setting "an extraordinarily damaging precedent" for press freedoms in the region.*

The case, widely seen as an attempt to muzzle the media, followed a complaint by a businessman about a story written five years earlier about his alleged ties to a then-judge in the nation's top court.

What is the significance?

First of all, for press freedom in the Philippines, which was already under threat, it is dire.

Second, for Maria Ressa, a gross injustice is being done.

Third, it's only time before right-wing thugs copy each other. How long before 'fake news libel' becomes commonplace and press freedom disappears?

Fourth, blog freedom goes as well in that case, of course.

As, fifth, does democracy.

Worry.