

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Thailand: Government must protect human rights defenders**

Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the recent killing of Charoen Wat-aksorn, a well-known human rights defender, and is calling on Thai authorities to take immediate action to investigate his killing and to protect other human rights defenders.

Charoeon Wat-aksorn, a prominent environmental activist, was shot by unidentified assailants on 22 June 2004, on his way home from testifying to a parliamentary anti-corruption committee. He had reportedly recently filed a complaint about the illegal seizures of public land. Charoen had recently successfully led a 10 year local campaign against the construction of a coal fired power plant in Prajuab Keereekan province, southwest of Bangkok.

Amnesty International urges the Thai government to initiate an independent, impartial, effective and immediate investigation into Charoen's death.

Moreover, Amnesty International remains concerned by the lack of a proper investigation into the recent deaths of other human rights defenders, including six men killed between September and February 2003. Rural activists Boorith Chanarong, Preecha Thonpan, Boonsom Nimnoi, Boonyong Intawong, Kaew Pinpanma, and Khampan Suksai had led community protests against construction projects and illegal logging in their areas.

Amnesty International calls on the Thai government to demonstrate its commitment to protect human rights defenders by ensuring that justice is done and seen to be done in the investigation of this and other killings, and by publicly condemning this most recent killing in the strongest possible terms.