

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS MAY FACE 100+ YEARS IN PRISON

Authorities continue to indict and detain human rights defenders for peacefully exercising their human rights and participating in protests for reform. Authorities continue to deny the right to bail to some of the activists who have contracted COVID-19 during a recent outbreak in Bangkok prisons. Thailand must amend or repeal the repressive laws it is using to suppress peaceful assembly and the expression of critical and dissenting opinions.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha
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Dear Prime Minister,

I write to express my grave concern for the ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders in Thailand, which has seen at least 635 people, including 41 children targeted with criminal proceedings solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Your government continues to indict, put on trial and arbitrarily detain students and other peaceful protesters, including children, under legislation including lèse-majesté and sedition.

*It is distressing to learn that dozens of students and peaceful protesters, including **Parit 'Penguin' Chiwarak, Anon Numpa, Panupong 'Mike' Jahnok, Panusaya 'Rung' Sithijirawattanakul, Piyarat 'Toto' Chongthep, Chai-amorn 'Ammy' Kaewwiboonpan, Pornsorn 'Fah' Weerathamjaree, Wanwale 'Tee' Thammasattaya and Siraphop 'Kha Nun' Phumphuengphut** are at risk of lengthy prison sentences for the peaceful exercise of their human rights during protests.*

*I am further concerned about the health and well-being of the detained individuals, especially in light of an ongoing COVID-19 outbreak in prison. Specifically, I find it alarming that **Anon Numpa, and Panupong 'Mike' Jahnok** have contracted COVID-19 in detention and have had repeated bail applications denied. This is further worrying as they have been without adequate access to family members or legal counsel.*

It is important that your government upholds Thailand's international and constitutional human rights obligations and allow people to express their opinions, including on social media, and peacefully participate in public protests. As you will be aware, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have previously found Thai authorities to have breached its international human rights obligations by prosecuting and arbitrarily detaining lèse majesté suspects, including by holding them in unnecessary pre-trial detention and repeatedly denying bail.

Therefore, I call on you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release and/or withdraw charges against protesters and others targeted for peaceful exercise of their rights, drop all criminal proceedings against them**
- **Pending the release of detained protesters, provide adequate access to their family and lawyers and ensure they have adequate access to medical treatment**
- **In line with repeated UPR and UN expert recommendations, amend or repeal legislation to ensure it conforms with Thailand's international human rights obligations, association, and peaceful assembly.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In an apparent bid to silence a peaceful, mainly youth-led, reform movement, the Thai government is judicially harassing student and other human rights defenders involved in the Ratsadon (The People) movement. Students and other activists who have participated and spoken at overwhelmingly peaceful protests and flash mobs for political, constitutional and educational reform, face [multiple unwarranted charges](#) for their speeches and calls for reform, with a series of trial dates set in May and June 2021. Authorities have held them for prolonged periods in pre-trial detention with bail repeatedly denied, including for reasons which the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has previously said do not justify the denial of bail.

Authorities continue to indict, and remand persons engaged in protests or commenting online on the monarchy to custody, under emergency laws, vaguely worded articles of the Criminal Code governing sedition and offence to the monarchy (*lèse majesté*), which carry up to seven and fifteen years' imprisonment respectively, as well as under laws on computer crimes and public assembly. UN human rights experts have repeatedly expressed concern at the use of these laws to penalise the peaceful exercise of rights and called on authorities to amend or repeal them.

Lawyer Anon Numpa, 36, [detained since 9 February 2021](#), and student Panupong 'Mike' Chadnok, 24, detained since 8 March, are among prominent protest leaders who authorities have repeatedly denied bail, including on the basis they face charges carrying a lengthy prison sentence. They have contracted COVID-19 during their imprisonment, which has coincided with a major COVID-19 outbreak in Bangkok prisons. Anon Numpa, the Gwangju 2021 Prize for Human Rights awardee, has refused to accept all conditions for release on bail, including ones which may restrict his peaceful exercise of freedom of expression.

Other detained protesters have now been released on bail under conditions, including undertaking to attend court hearings when summoned, not leaving the country without permission and refrain from damaging the monarchy and activities that create unrest. Among these individuals, politics student Parit 'Penguin' Chiwarak, 22, and sociology student Panusaya 'Rung' Sittijirawattanakul, 22, were detained for 93 and 60 days respectively, after spending weeks on hunger strike in protest against the court's persistent denial of bail. Parit was hospitalised on 30 April 2021, with suspected gastro-intestinal bleeding.

Authorities have denied bail to prominent protesters who face charges under Article 112, Thailand's *lèse majesté* law. There has been a long-standing pattern of arbitrary pre-trial detention of *lèse majesté* suspects in Thailand. Courts have justified denying bail on the basis of the lengthy sentences allowed under the *lèse majesté* law. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has previously stated the Thai government's justification for denying people bail because of the length of sentence allowed is not a [valid reason](#) to deny people this right

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Thai or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 July 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Panusaya (she/her), Jatupat (he/him) Anon (he/him), Panupong (he/him); Parit (he/him); Somyot (he/him), Piyarat (he/him), Chai-amorn (he/him). Pornsorn (he,him), Wanwalee (he/him), Siraphop (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/3891/2021/en/>