

Thailand's anti-drug policy should not be killing people

Amnesty International is concerned that government measures against drug crime in Thailand have led to serious human rights violations, including alleged extrajudicial killing and use of the death penalty.

Summary

“We'd make sure the drug traffickers have only two places to stay - jail or the cemetery. They'd have no other places to stay in our society.”

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, 24 March 2003.

Amnesty International is concerned that government measures against drug crime in Thailand have led to serious human rights violations, including alleged extrajudicial killing and use of the death penalty.

Thailand is a major hub for drug trafficking, and has the highest methamphetamine abuse rates in the world. In 2001 authorities declared that they were waging a “war against narcotic drugs.”

Last year more than 1,000 people were killed within three months during a government campaign to eradicate drugs, particularly methamphetamines, from the country. There has been no thorough and independent investigation of their deaths and of all allegations of security forces' reported involvement in a number of cases.

Since 2001, hundreds of men and women, including foreign nationals and members of Thailand's ethnic minorities, have been sentenced to death for drug offences, and numbers on death row have tripled.

Join Amnesty International in calling on authorities to institute an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into those killed between February and March 2003, to make the findings public, and to bring to justice any member of the security forces suspected of involvement. Amnesty International also calls on authorities to abolish the death penalty, and pending this to institute an immediate moratorium on executions in the country.

Take action!

Write to the government of Thailand urging them to institute an independent investigation and to abolish the death penalty. You can base your letter on the following sample:

Sample Letter

Dear Prime Minister,

While acknowledging the seriousness of Thailand's drugs problem, and your government's need to combat drug crime, I write to urge that in doing so you do not violate human rights.

Amnesty International is concerned that no independent, thorough and impartial investigation has taken place into the killing of more than 1,000 people in the context of the “war on drugs” in 2003, and into allegations of security forces' involvement in a number of cases. I urge that your government ensure that such an investigation is opened, that the method and findings are made public; that any government official suspected of involvement in extrajudicial killing is

brought to justice, and that relatives of the deceased are provided with reparation, including compensation.

I am also concerned by reports that hundreds of persons convicted of drug offences have been sentenced to death, and urge that you abolish the death penalty in law. Pending its abolition, I urge that you impose an immediate moratorium on executions. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. It is, moreover, an irreversible punishment that carries the grave risk of judicial error.

Yours sincerely,

Target contact details

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