

URGENT ACTION

STUDENTS CHARGED FOR PEACEFUL PROTEST

Sixteen students have been charged for taking part in peaceful protests and may face imprisonment and trial in a military court. Fourteen of them are detained in prison, and have also been charged with sedition, which carries a sentence of seven years in prison.

Thatchapong Gaedum and **Nachacha Kongudom** were arrested on 23 May for violating the National Council for Peace and Order's Order 3/2015, which criminalizes peaceful political gatherings of five people or more. They were later released on bail. Plainclothes officers arrested students **Chatupat Boonyapatraksa**, **Anuwat Suntarak**, **Payu Boonsopon**, **Panupong Srithanuwat**, **Suvicha Tipangkorn**, **Supachai Pukrongpoy**, **Wasant Satesit**, **Rattapol Supasupon**, **Rangsiman Rome**, **Songtham Kaewpanpruk**, **Chonthicha Jaengraew**, **Apisit Sapnapapan**, **Pakorn Areekul**, and **Pornchai Yuanyee** at around 5pm on 26 June and also charged them with violating a ban on political gatherings. This group of 14 students is also facing sedition charges under Section 116 of the Thai Penal Code, which allows for up to seven years' imprisonment for anyone seeking to cause "unrest and disaffection... or to cause people to transgress the laws of the country."

The students had taken part in two peaceful demonstrations in the centres of Bangkok and Khon Kaen in Northeast Thailand on 22 May, the anniversary of the 2014 military coup. Following official calls for them to report to police, the students carried out two peaceful protests on 24 and 25 June in Bangkok, including outside a police station on 24 June. Police officers at that station had reportedly refused to accept a complaint by the Bangkok students, who reported having been assaulted by authorities during the 22 May protest.

Amnesty International considers the 16 students as prisoners of conscience deprived of their liberty solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

Please write immediately in Thai or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the above 14 students and drop all charges against all 16 students charged in relation to their exercise of the human right to peaceful assembly.
- Urging that pending the release of the 14 above students they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated and have access to lawyers of their choice, visits from family members and adequate medical care
- Calling on them to repeal or else amend all laws and edicts which arbitrarily restrict the right to peaceful assembly in accordance with Thailand's obligations under international human rights law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 AUGUST 2015 TO:

Royal Thai Police Commissioner-
General

Somyot Pumphuanmuang,
Royal Thai Police,
1 Building, Floor 7 Rama 1 Road,
Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330
Thailand

Fax: +66 2 618 2538

Email: prforeign@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear General

Prime Minister

Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha
Government House
Pitsanulok Road, Dusit
Bangkok 10300 Thailand
Fax: 66 2 282-5131

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

And copies to:

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for
Foreign Affairs

Thanasak Patimapragorn
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sri Ayudhya Road
Bangkok 10400

Thailand

Fax: +66 2643 5320 / +66 2643 5314

Email: minister@mfa.go.th

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 136/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/1902/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Authorities had announced on 19 June that they would arrest students if they failed to report to face charges of violating an official ban on political activity and holding a public gathering for demonstrating on the first anniversary of Thailand's military coup on 22 May.

The seven Khon Kaen University students are part of the Dao Din group, a student discussion and human rights society at Khon Kaen University. Their work on social and environmental campaigns was recognized in an award from Thailand's National Human Rights Commission in December 2014. Authorities have warned grass roots groups, including the Neo E-saan Movement and the Khon Rak Ban Koed group, who expressed public support for the seven students since their arrest in May 2015 that such activities are prohibited.

In November 2014 members of the Dao Din group were arrested for flashing the three-finger "Hunger Games" salute during a speech by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha in Khon Kaen.

During the protests in Bangkok, on 22 May police detained more than 30 students and other activists at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, one of the first sites of spontaneous anti-coup protests in 2014. Eye-witnesses reported seeing plain-clothes army officers and police carrying out unprovoked physical attacks on students, whose protest was entirely peaceful. Video clips posted on YouTube appear to confirm these reports. Student Songtham Kaewpranpuk received emergency medical treatment after being found unconscious. Two other students, Rattapol Supsapon and Rangsuman Rome were also reportedly injured. All three are now among those currently detained.

Since the military took power on 22 May 2014, political gatherings of five or more persons are prohibited, and those who carry them out face prosecution in a military court. Students – including the Dao Din group and other Thai student groups – have engaged in peaceful, symbolic actions, including protests in groups of less than five persons, which have nevertheless also been suppressed. Thai authorities continue to arbitrarily detain and imprison individuals, prevent or censor meetings and public events, and otherwise suppress peaceful dissent.

Uniformed and plain-clothes officers have visited the houses and searched premises of at least 17 student activists since March 2015 and warned them and their families not to engage in political activities. Since the 2014 coup university staff have received orders from the army and Education Ministry to monitor student activities that criticized military authorities and to forbid or severely restrict student engagement in political activities. Nationwide, university lecturers and rectors have been "visited" by armed troops and instructed to ensure that no political activities take place in their universities.

Name: Chatupat Boonyapatraksa (m), Apiwat Suntarak (m), Payu Boonsophon (m), Panupong Srithanawat (m), Suvicha Tipangkorn (m), Supachai Phukrongploy (m), Wasant Satesit (m), Rattapol Supasophon (m), Rangsiman Rome (m), Songtham Kaewpanpruk (m), Chonthicha Jaengraew (f), Apisit Sapanapan (m), Pakorn Areekul (m), Pornchai Yuanyee (m), Nachacha Kongudom (f), Thatchapong Gaedum (m)
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 136/15 Index: ASA 39/1977/2015 Issue Date: 1 July 2015