

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 77/91 Death Threats/Fear of Extrajudicial Execution

4 March 1991

THAILAND

Maj Gen Manuun Ruupkhajorn
Chalerm Yuubamrung (Police Captain (retired))
Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit
Dr Kraisaak Chunhawan
Phansak Winyarat

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that the five people named above may be at risk of extrajudicial execution by security authorities following a military coup d'etat in Thailand on 23 February 1991. At least one, Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit, has allegedly been the target of telephone death threats feared to originate with the security authorities, and security force "hunter-killer" (laa-sanghaan) teams are allegedly involved in seeing to apprehend at least two others, Maj Gen Manuun Ruupkhajorn and Dr Kraisaak Chunhawan. Fears have also been expressed that the lives of Pol Capt (retired) Chalerm Yuubamrung and Phansak Winyarat may be at risk. Concern about the physical safety of the five and others who may be seen by the authors of the coup d'etat as their political enemies, has been heightened by a broadcast over army radio suggesting that they deserve to die.

The five people who may be at risk are among nine people who have been prohibited from leaving Thailand by the National Peace-keeping Council (NPKC), a group of senior military officers who on 23 February 1991 overthrew the elected government of the Prime Minister, General (retired) Chatichai Choochavan. All except Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit are reportedly now in hiding. Arrest warrants have reportedly been issued for two of them, Maj Gen Manuun and Pol Capt (retired) Chalerm.

NPKC authorities have said Manuun Ruupkhajorn, a one-time leader of army "Young Turks" who was involved in failed attempts at coups d'etat in 1981 and 1985, is wanted for alleged involvement in plots to assassinate prominent Thai political figures in 1982. At the time the NPKC assumed power, he was an adviser to Prime Minister Chatichai Choochavan, who was also then the Minister of Defense.

Chalerm Yuubamrung, the leader of the Muanchon (Masses) Party, is a former cabinet minister attached to Chatichai Choochavan's office. Known as an outspoken critic of the military, he had been dropped from the cabinet before the coup d'etat because of military opposition his membership in it. He is wanted for having failed to appear at civil court case hearing after the coup d'etat. In the case, Chalerm is accused of having defamed a senior police officer by alleging in a newspaper interview that the officer had once attempted to kill a student.

Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit, Dr Kraisaak Chunhawan and Phansak Winyarat were all advisers to Prime Minister Chatichai Choochavan, and Kraisaak is the deposed prime minister's son. Chai-anan and Kraisaak are political scientists and well-known analysts and critics of military involvement in domestic Thai politics. Kraisaak and Phansak had were known as opponents of the military's involvement in the country's economic and foreign policies, including military support for Cambodia's "Khmer Rouge". Leaflets that appeared before the military coup d'etat accused Kraisaak of involvement in assassination plots in connection with which Manuun Ruupkhajorn has been charged, but there are no formal charges against Kraisaak himself.

In the telephoned death threats allegedly aimed at Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit, he was

reportedly warned that if he spoke out against the coup d'etat he would be killed. It is believed that the fear of retaliation by the NCPK has inhibited the former civilian advisers now in hiding from criticising the military takeover.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 23 February 1991 Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, General Sunthorn Khongsomphong, announced the overthrow of the government of the Prime Minister, General (retired) Chatichai Choonhavan. The Supreme Commander heads the NPKC, which also includes the commanders of the army, air force and navy. Prime Minister Chatichai

Choonhavan was the head of the Chaat Thai (Thai Nation) Party, which won the largest number of seats in the last general election in 1988. He became Thailand's first elected prime minister since 1976. As prime minister, he had increasingly tense relations with senior military and police officers, and was seen as challenging their influence over the country's political life. In overthrowing the government, the military accused it of corruption and alleged that its policies had been unduly influenced by advisers brought in from outside the ranks of senior civil servants. Chatichai has been detained along with his recently appointed Deputy Minister of Defense, General (retired) Arthit Kamlang-ek, and several important aides and advisers. Among them are the other four people who have been prohibited from leaving the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about report that the lives of the five people named above may be at risk, and in particular that Dr Chai-Anan Samutwanit has been the target of telephoned death threats and that "hunter-killer" teams may have been despatched to apprehend Major General Manuun Ruupkhajorn and Dr Kraisaak Chunnawn;
- asking the NPKC to seek to identify anyone who may have threatened Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit and that anyone found responsible be brought to justice;
- asking the NPKC to ensure that the authorities concerned take all necessary steps to ensure the physical safety of Dr Chai-anan Samutwanit and the four other people named above.

APPEALS TO

Gen Sunthorn Khongsomphong, Supreme Commander
 Gen Suchina Khraprayun, Army Commander
 Adm Praphat Kritsanachan, Navy Commander
 ACM Kaset Rotchananin, Air Force Commander

all to the same address:

The National Peacekeeping Council
 Suan Runruedii
 Dusit
 Bangkok 10310, Thailand

Telegrams: (Rank), National Peacekeeping Council, Bangkok, Thailand

Telexes: c/o 84791 INFODEP TH (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Faxes: c/o + 66 2 224 7095 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Sawat Amornwiwat
 Police Director General
 Ministry of Interior
 Atsadang Road
 Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Telegrams: Police Director General, Bangkok, Thailand
Telexes: c/o 84791 INFODEP TH (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Faxes: c/o + 66 2 224 7095 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Thailand in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 April 1991.