

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**EXTRA 51/92**

**Legal Concern/Prisoner of Conscience**

**18 May 1992**

**THAILAND:**

**Chamlong Srimuang, Member of Parliament  
and others arrested or killed during protest  
demonstrations**

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Amnesty International is concerned that on 18 May the Thai security forces arrested Chamlong Srimuang, a member of parliament who is the leader of a series of protest demonstrations which broke out on 4 May 1992 in Bangkok, the capital.

Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International is also concerned that the Thai authorities have issued warrants for the arrest of six other demonstration organizers, who are possible prisoners of conscience.

Demonstrations have been in protest at the appointment of General Suchinda Khraprayun as Prime Minister on 7 April after the 22 March general elections in Thailand. General Suchinda, not an elected member of parliament, was chosen by the majority coalition of political parties in parliament. He also led a coup d'etat in February 1991 which removed Chatichai Choonhavan, the elected Prime Minister, from power.

The latest demonstration took place on 17 May, when some 150,000 to 200,000 people gathered and attempted to march to Government House. As they were moving towards it, they were stopped by barricades erected by soldiers. Some of the demonstrators reportedly tried to breach the barbed wire barricade, and soldiers used water cannons and truncheons in an attempt to disperse them. However, the crowd did not disperse and there were reports of some demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. Chamlong reportedly called for an end to violence and a continuation of peaceful protests asking for the immediate resignation of General Suchinda.

Demonstrations continued into the early morning of 18 May, when General Suchinda declared a State of Emergency and banned all gatherings of more than ten people.

All publications "that endanger public security or cause public unrest" were also banned. Security forces reportedly advanced through the streets, firing rounds of automatic weapon fire in an effort to disperse the demonstrators fleeing before them. At least five people are believed to have been killed, with scores of others injured, mostly by truncheon beatings by police. Although Amnesty International does not have the names of those who were killed, it is concerned that the Thai security forces may have used excessive force in attempting to break up the demonstrations.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Some 50,000 demonstrators called for the resignation of General Suchinda in

Bangkok on 20 April 1992. On 4 May during another demonstration Chamlong Srimuang, former Governor of Bangkok and leader of the opposition Palang Dharma Party, began a hunger strike in front of parliament. Opposition politicians boycotted the opening of parliament, but General Suchinda stated that he would not resign because his appointment was in line with the constitution drafted by a military-appointed body allowing for an unelected Prime Minister. Chamlong ended his fast on 9 May but continued to call for General Suchinda's resignation. Demonstrations continued peacefully until 11 May, when protesters planned to regroup a week later. The five-party ruling coalition agreed to seek constitutional amendments, incorporating a new clause requiring the prime minister to be an elected

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member of parliament, and General Suchinda stated that he would step down if parliament asked him to do so. Debate on the constitutional changes was due to begin on 18 May amid speculation that the amendment would not affect Suchinda's administration. Just before the latest demonstration, Chamlong had stated that protests would take place on 17 May because of alleged military interference with plans for the demonstration.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Chamlong Srimuang and all others arrested for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.
- asking for assurances that no one else will be detained for the non-violent expression of their political views during the 17-18 May demonstrations;
- expressing concern that the Thai security forces may have used excessive force in the use of firearms to disperse demonstrators.

**APPEALS TO**

General Suchinda Khraprayun  
Prime Minister and Minister of Defence  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Government House  
Nakhorn Pathom Road  
Bangkok 10300  
THAILAND

**Telegrams: General Khraprayun, Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Telexes: 84791 IMFODEP TH (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Faxes: + 66 2 280 1443**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej  
The Grand Palace  
Na Phra Lan Road  
Bangkok 10200, THAILAND

**Salutation: Your Majesty**

and 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 29 June 1992.