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Thailand: Protest groups and government should reject political violence

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are calling on the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), the Thai government and pro-government groups to commit to ending political violence in resolving their differences.

The potential for violence remains, even though PAD leaders have called a halt to the occupation of Bangkok's two international airports. Several people have been killed and dozens injured since the PAD protests escalated in August.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are demanding:

- The Thai government should create an independent commission to investigate promptly, effectively and impartially any reports of human rights abuses and violence and hold those responsible to account;
- The Thai government should ensure that security forces adhere to international principles on crowd dispersal and the use of force, including using force only as a last resort and to the minimum extent necessary;
- The PAD should refrain from abusing human rights, including the right to life and freedom of movement;
- The PAD should refrain from obstructing government actions aimed at protecting human rights.

Both human rights groups have researchers in Thailand who have reported specific problems which could trigger further violence including:

- The PAD leaders have armed many of their supporters;
- Violence has spread outside of Bangkok following a deadly clash in Chiang Mai province where the police stood back and made no effort to intervene;
- Clashes between pro-government groups and the PAD have resulted in several deaths and dozens of injuries;
- Media freedom and freedom of expression in Thailand have been casualties of the growing political conflict.

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