

Amnesty International Public Statement 9 April 2016

Thailand: Authorities must Protect Human Rights Defenders in the Line of Fire

Following the shooting on 8 April 2016 of Thai land rights activist Supoj Kansong by unknown assailants in Surat Thani, Amnesty International calls on authorities to promptly, thoroughly and transparently investigate the incident and increase measures to protect him and other members of the Khlong Sai Pattana community, who are believed to be at continuing risk of human rights abuses.

The shooting of Supoj Kansong is a deplorable act and yet another blow to a community that authorities have failed to adequately protect from killings, death threats, harassment and intimidation, believed to be related to their human rights work and activism.

The Khlong Sai Pattana community has since 2008 been occupying land in the Chai Buri district of Surat Thani, southern Thailand, during which time those living there have faced killings, death threats, harassment, intimidation and destruction of property and crops.

The community, which has been part of a land title project, has been supported by community land reform advocates the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand in their ongoing land dispute involving a palm oil company, the Jiew Kang Jue Pattana company Ltd. The company has not followed orders by Thailand's Supreme Court in 2014 to vacate land in Chai Buri district.

Amnesty International urge the Thailand's Department of Special Investigation to promptly, thoroughly, effectively and transparently investigate this shooting and also the deaths of four other human rights defenders in this community since 2010, for which no-one has yet been held to account. Prosecutions into all four killings collapsed due to lack of adequate evidence.

Suspected perpetrators must be brought to justice in a trial that meets international standards of fairness to end this cycle of unpunished violence.

Unknown assailants are believed to have shot and ambushed Supoj as he drove back to the community on the afternoon of 8 April 2016.

Supoj Kansong is the nephew of activist Chai Bunthonglek, who was shot dead by a gunman on a motorcycle on the outskirts of the Khlong Sai Pattana community on 11 February 2015. Kansong testified in the subsequent trial, in which the sole suspect was acquitted.

In November 2012, two women activists, trader Montha Chukaew and labourer Pranee Boonrat, were shot dead while travelling back from a local market.

The other activist killed was motorcycle mechanic Somporn Pattanaphum, who was found riddled with bullet holes on the outskirts of his village in January 2010.

