

URGENT ACTION

13 PEACEFUL ACTIVISTS FACING TRIAL

Ten students and three labour rights activists were arrested on 23 June for distributing leaflets about the forthcoming constitutional referendum in Thailand on 7 August. Seven of the students are detained in Bangkok Remand Prison.

Army and police officers arrested ten students and three labour activists on 23 June while they handed out leaflets at a market in Bang Phli district, Samut Prakhon Province, on the outskirts of Thailand's capital Bangkok. The police held them in custody overnight and Bangkok Military Court released six of them on bail on 24 June. The Court sent the seven remaining activists to Bangkok Remand Prison where they are still detained. They are due to appear at Bangkok Military Court to review their detention order on 5 July.

The group has been charged with violating a ban on political meetings of five or more people and for campaigning to influence voters in Thailand's forthcoming constitutional referendum on 7 August. They face up to 10 years' and 6 months' imprisonment, fines of up to 210,000 baht (US\$ 5,998) and a 10 year voting ban under the Constitutional Referendum Act (2016) and Head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) Order 3/2015.

Seven of the students - **Rangsiman Rome, Anan Loket, Yuttana Dasri, Korakoch Saengyenpan, Thirayut Napnaram, Somsakol Thongsuksai** and **Nantapong Panmat** - are detained in Bangkok Remand Prison after they refused to accept the jurisdiction of the Bangkok Military Court and to request bail on 24 June. Rangsiman Rome and Koranoch Saengyenpan already face charges of illegal political assembly for their part in demonstrations by the New Democracy Movement, a student led pro-democracy protest movement formed in 2015 following the suppression of student protest on the first anniversary of the military coup in 2014. Rangsiman Rome was also charged with sedition.

The military court granted bail to three labour activists and three students - Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand committee member **Konchanok Tanakhun**, Triumph International (Thailand) trade union members **Tueanjai Waengkham** and **Pimai Ratwongsa** and students **Worawut Butmat, Rackchart Wong-arthichart** and **Phanthip Saengathit**. The court imposed restrictive conditions on the group for bail, including prohibitions related to facilitating or participating in public protest.

Please write immediately in Thai or your own language:

- Expressing concern that the 13 activists were arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- Urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the seven detained in Bangkok Remand Prison and drop all charges against all 13 activists;
- Urging authorities to lift restrictions on the peaceful exercise of the rights to expression, association and assembly, including during the implementation of plans for political transition.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 AUGUST 2016 TO:

Gen. Paiboon Koomchaya
Ministry of Justice
Country Govt Center Building at the
Prestigious 80th December 5, 2550
120 Moo 3, Building A Road Rd Lak Si,
Bangkok 10210
Fax: +66 2953 0503
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prime Minister
General Prayut Chan-ocha
Government House
Pitsanulok Road, Dusit
Bangkok 10300, Thailand
Fax: +66 2282 5131
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

And copies to:
Chairman
Supachai Somcharoen
Election Commission of Thailand
Government Building, Chaeng Watthana
Road, Thung Song Hong, Khet Lak Si,
Bangkok, 10210, 10210, Thailand
Fax: 66-2-6943228

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thailand's military government, which took power in a coup in May 2014, is implementing its plans for political transition leading to elections in 2017, including by bringing a draft Constitution to a public referendum on 7 August.

As they approach the next stage in their political road map, authorities continue to excessively and sweepingly restrict peaceful exercise of the human rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, in violation of Thailand legal obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Constitutional Referendum Act (2016) provides for up to 10 years' imprisonment, fines of up to 210,000 baht (US\$ 5,998) and up to 10 years' revocation of the right to vote, for activities and statements "causing confusion to affect orderliness of voting" – including by using "offensive" or "rude" language to influence people's votes. Head of NCPO Order 3/2015 allows for six months' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 baht for anyone participating in political meetings of five or more persons.

Senior members of the government, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, have asserted to the media that freedom of expression is not necessary during this period of political transition. They have stated they will not allow public debates and expression of views to the media on the Constitution. Officials are considering taking legal action against the makers of a dance video calling for people to vote "no" in the forthcoming referendum, anyone opposing the Constitution on Facebook or wearing t-shirts with slogans advocating rejecting it. All this is in clear violation of Thailand's obligation under international human rights law in particular Article 19 of the ICCPR, to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression,

On 16 June 2016 authorities announced they were filing charges against the Chairman and 18 other leaders of the political group United Front for Democracy in Dictatorship for violating an official ban on "political" meetings of five or more persons. The group had attempted to hold an opening ceremony on 5 June at their headquarters for their initiative to monitor the referendum. Police stormed the group's headquarters, forced the group to stop their ceremony, and officials closed the monitoring centres across the country.

Name: Rangsiman Rome (m), Anan Loket (m), Yuttana Dasri (m), Korakoch Saengyenpan (m), Thirayut Napnaram (m), Somsakol Thongsuksai (m), Nantapong Panmat (m) Konchanok Tanakhun (f), Tueanjai Waengkham (f), Pimai Ratwongsa (f), Worawut Butmat (m), Rackchart Wongarthichart (m), Phanthip Saengathit (m)

Gender m/f: both

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