

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Thailand: 10 years later -- still no justice for the May 1992 victims**

It has been 10 years since the military violently suppressed mass pro-democracy demonstrations in Bangkok during May 1992. At least 52 people were killed, hundreds were injured, and 34 "disappeared" without a trace. Yet those responsible have still not been brought to justice.

"The families of those killed or 'disappeared' and people who were injured are still waiting for the truth to be established and for justice to be done. They must not wait another 10 years," Amnesty International said today, on the anniversary of the demonstrations.

The events of 10 years ago marked a turning point in Thai political life. After the massacre in Bangkok, the military have remained in their barracks and have generally refrained from interfering in politics. Yet none of the military commanders who gave orders to open fire directly into unarmed demonstrators have had to answer for their actions before a court.

Today the Thai people will be commemorating the 10th anniversary of the pro-democracy movement and looking forward to further human rights reforms which need to be made. A seminar is currently taking place in Bangkok and, on 19 May, people will march to the Democracy Monument to remember the victims.

"There have been significant improvements in the human rights situation during the last 10 years in Thailand. A new reformist constitution was promulgated in October 1997, and provides for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. However the security forces, including the army and police, are often not held accountable for torture and unlawful killings of civilians. Moreover the death penalty remains in force and in April 2002 five people were executed," Amnesty International said.

#### **Background**

In February 1991 a military-led coup overthrew the democratically elected civilian government of Chatchai Choonhavan and established the National Peacekeeping Council (NPKC). After elections in March 1992 coup leader General Suchinda Kraprayoon became the non-elected Prime Minister.

In May 1992 hundreds of thousands of demonstrators protested the appointment of General Suchinda Kraprayoon. During the course of the demonstrations the security forces opened fire at head height on unarmed demonstrators, and beat and kicked civilians who posed no threat to their safety.

On 23 May 1992 Prime Minister General Suchinda Kraprayoon issued a sweeping Amnesty Decree which apparently applied to both the demonstrators and the armed forces. The next day he resigned his post and an interim government administered the country until the election of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai in September 1992. Subsequently the Amnesty Decree has been upheld by the Thai judiciary.

In July 1992 the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes was founded, comprising families of the "disappeared", those killed or disabled. They have worked for almost 10 years for the truth to be revealed, but their efforts have so far been frustrated.

In the aftermath of the May 1992 events several committees were established by the government to conduct investigations. Although some parts of the committees' reports have been made public, no one has been named as being responsible for ordering troops to open fire on unarmed, mostly peaceful demonstrators.

In September 2001 Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra established a new committee to investigate the events of May 1992, headed by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun. The committee has met and interviewed the families of the victims, but to date no results have been forthcoming.

The (UN) Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has accepted 31 of 34 cases of people who "disappeared" during the May 1992 events, which were submitted to them in October 2001. These cases were subsequently transmitted to the Royal Thai Government, but as of the 2002 Commission on Human Rights, the Working Group had not received any new information from them about the whereabouts of the people concerned.

Amnesty International calls on the Royal Thai Government to make the results of all investigations public, in order to establish the truth of the events. It further urges the government to bring those found responsible to justice, and to provide adequate compensation to the victims and their families.

#### Public Document

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