

URGENT ACTION

31 PEACEFUL PROTESTORS FACE IMPRISONMENT

Thai authorities issued arrest warrant for 15 pro-democracy leaders and activists for their role in a mass gathering in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, on 18 July 2020. 16 other protestors have been summoned and charged from the same incident. All 31 face serious allegations including sedition – this broadly worded and repressive law is often used by the government to silence critical voices. If convicted, each activist could face up to seven years in prison. This recent slew of arrests of peaceful demonstrators illustrates the authorities' intensifying crackdown on freedom of expression and assembly.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha
Office of the Prime Minister
Pitsanulok Road
Bangkok 10300
Thailand
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Dear Prime Minister,

I am deeply concerned that your government charged 31 individuals solely for their role in organizing or joining in a peaceful demonstration on 18 July 2020.

As you may be aware, the police issued arrest warrant for 15 protestors on 7 August 2020. While some of them have since been arrested and released on bail, it was further distressing to learn that at least 16 other individuals were later summoned. All of the protestors are facing serious charges, including sedition, arising from the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly and expression. I fear that this broad and overreaching charge is being used to silence critics of your administration.

Unfortunately, Thailand has a long history of unlawful or politically-motivated arrests and I am saddened that the crackdown on activism in public spaces has once more intensified. It is alarming that each of these peaceful protestors faces up to seven years in prison, if convicted, for simply exercising their human rights.

Under international human rights laws and standards, participating in and organizing peaceful assemblies are fundamental rights to which all people are entitled, so is freedom to express their opinions and criticisms of any government. Simply exercising these rights is not a crime in itself and should never have been so treated.

I therefore urge you to:

- ***Immediately drop all charges against the 31 protestors and other individuals charged solely for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression;***
- ***Cease all attempts or operations aimed at dissuading public participation in peaceful gatherings or silencing voices critical of the government and social issues;***
- ***Amend or repeal all broadly-worded, repressive, or vague legislation and regulations to conform with the country's commitments to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 18 July 2020, 31 individuals, including several university students, had taken part in a peaceful demonstration at the Democracy Monument in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, organized by a student-led movement Free Youth. The gathering attended by an estimated 2,400 protestors listed three demands to the Thai government: parliament dissolution and fresh elections, a new constitution, and an end to harassment against individuals.

Each of the activists face up to seven years in prison if convicted. All of them face charges that include: sedition, assembly intended to do act of violence, refusing to comply with an order of an official, obstructing the public way and committing an act of violence not amounting to bodily or mental harm to the other person under Articles 116, 215, 368, 385, and 391 of the Penal Code, respectively; violation of the Emergency Decree; offence under the Communicable Diseases Act; obstructing the traffic under Article 114 of the Land Traffic Act; Article 19 of the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness Act; and the use of an amplifier without authorities' permission under Article 4 of the Controlling Public Advertisement by Sound Amplifier Act.

15 out of 31 individuals have an arrest warrant issued against them. To date, 13 activists out of 15 have been arrested and bailed out with 100,000 Thai baht (approx. USD 3,000) surety each, or with positions of professor or parliamentarian as a guarantee. Two individuals still face the risk of arrest. The 16 other protestors are facing the same allegations and are due to report themselves to the police at Samranrat station, Bangkok, on 28 August 2020.

One of those arrested on 7 August – lawyer Arnon Nampa – was arrested again by police from Chanasongkram station on 19 August for his role in a Harry Potter-themed rally in Bangkok on 3 August, at which Arnon gave a speech calling for a reform of the Thai monarchy. He was later granted bail with conditions not to carry out the same alleged acts. The police later arrested Panupong Chadnok (Mike) and Arnon again, on 24 and 25 August respectively, for joining a different protest at Thammasat University, Pathum Thani province, on 10 August. In this case, the pair face serious charges including sedition and importing to the computer system information deemed a threat to national security.

Since the imposition of stringent measures under the Emergency Decree on 26 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tens of thousands of people – including university and high school students – have taken to the streets to voice their demands regarding social and political matters. Apart from the three main demands listed at the 18 July protest, many of these demonstrators call for a reform to education, gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights, justice for enforced disappearance cases, among other issues. After the Emergency Decree came into effect, the authorities have increasingly detained and initiated criminal complaints against individuals who engaged in peaceful protests and activities. Demonstrators have reported being subject to intensifying harassment and intimidation by local officers in recent months solely for their involvement in peaceful demonstrations.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Thai or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 21 October 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: [Enter Name] Arnon Nampa (he/him), Baramee Chairat (he/him), Cholathit Chotsawas (he/him), Dechathorn Bumrungmuang (he/him), Jakkatorn Daoyame (he/him), Jatupat Boonpattaraksa (he/him), Jirathita Thammarak (she/her), Jutatip Sirikhan (she/her), Karnnithi Limcharoen (he/him), Korakot Sangyenpan (he/him), Kritsana Kaigaew (he/him), Lanlana Suriyo (she/her), Nawat Liangwattana (he/him), Nattapong Phugaew (he/him), Nattawut Somboonsap (he/him), Netnapa Amnajsongserm (she/her), Panusaya Sittijirawattanukul (he/him), Panumas Singprom (he/him), Panupong Chadnok (he/him), Parit Chiwarak (he/him), Pimsiri Petchnamrob (she/her), Prachaya Surakamchornroj (he/him), Sirin Mungcharoen (she/her), Suwanna Tanlek (she/her), Taksakorn Musikrak (he/him), Tattap Ruangprapaikitseree (he/him), Thanachai Eu-ruecha (he/him), Thanayuth Na Ayutthaya (he/him), Thanee Sasom (he/him), Todsapon Sinsomboon (he/him), Yamaruddin Songsiri (he/him)