

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha
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Dear Prime Minister,

I write to express my grave concern that your government is escalating a crackdown on students and other activists in Thailand, with over 400 people, including at least 23 children targeted with charges and criminal proceedings solely for peacefully exercising their human rights, including expressing their opinions on political and constitutional reforms in peaceful protests and social media posts.

It is a travesty that your government is punishing people who have peacefully exercised their human rights and is denying bail to 22 leading members of Ratsadon (the group called 'The People'), who face charges of violating vaguely worded provisions of laws on sedition and lèse majesté. The refusal of their requests for bail violates the right to presumption of innocence and is against Thailand's obligations under article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Detaining students including Jatupat 'Pai' Boonpattaraksa and student union leaders Panusaya 'Rung' Sithijirawattanakul; and Parit 'Penguin' Chiwarak, prevents them from preparing for forthcoming university examinations. Members of the group have further reported concerns for their security in detention.

As you will be aware, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have previously found that your government was arbitrarily holding lèse majesté suspects in lengthy pre-trial detention with bail repeatedly denied. The UN Human Rights Committee and other experts have also recommended Thailand amend or repeal laws that the authorities are using to charge people for the expression of critical and dissenting opinions and participation in peaceful protests, and to end related prosecutions.

I therefore urge you and your government to allow people to fully exercise their human rights including by allowing criticisms of authorities, in line with Thailand's Constitution and obligations under international human rights law.

Specifically, I call on you to:

- Release immediately and unconditionally all those detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and pending their release, take adequate measures to guarantee their physical security,
- Immediately drop all charges and criminal proceedings against protesters and others charged solely for peacefully exercising their human rights,
- Amend or repeal legislation to ensure it conforms with Thailand's international human rights obligations including on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Yours sincerely,