

In solidarity with Thailand's peaceful democracy movement

(Jakarta, 22 October 2020) – We, 72 organisations across Asia, stand in solidarity with the peaceful democracy movement in Thailand as it continues to push for fundamental freedoms and democratic reforms, in the midst of government repression.

The Government of Thailand should abide by its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to respect and protect the people's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

We assert that the 'State of Severe Emergency,' announced on 15 October 2020 violated international human rights standards, and failed to meet the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality.^[1]

We condemn the use of the 'national security' narrative to block these peaceful protests, as well as the attempts to portray the movement and its leaders as a threat to national security and to the stability of the nation.

We further condemn the use of police violence, including the use of water cannons on 16 October 2020 against peaceful protesters, which included high school and university students.^[2] This fails to meet OHCHR's guidance which states that water cannons are advisable for use only for situations 'of serious public order where there is a significant likelihood of loss of life, serious injury or the widespread destruction of property.'^[3]

The continuous arrests and the use of judicial harassment against human rights defenders are unjustifiable, and serve no other purpose than to instil fear and to promote reprisals against the movement. The arrested protesters and its leaders should be immediately and unconditionally released

We likewise condemn the use of intimidation and reprisals against social media users who have 'checked-in' at protests sites, taken selfies, or posted about the protests on social media. On 19 October 2020, the Minister of Digital Information announced that they will investigate more than 300,000 URLs of social media accounts that have allegedly violated the Emergency Decree.^[4]

We are also gravely concerned about efforts to have media organisations Prachatai, the Standard, The Reporters, and Voice TV investigated for their reporting of the protests, as well as efforts to prevent them from reporting these events.^[5] The role of journalism remains ever crucial in these times, and the government has the obligation to protect media freedom and independence. The right to access information is integral in the fulfilment of the people's right to freedom of expression.

We recognise that these tactics are also being used by other governments in the region to stifle social movements. These tactics violate international human rights standards, and have no role in any fair and just society.

We call on the Government of Thailand to commit to the respect and protection of freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly. We urge the government to:

- Refrain from any further use or announcement of orders and policies including under the Emergency Decree to hinder people's ability to exercise their fundamental rights;
- Immediately and unconditionally release all arrested Human Rights Defenders and protesters, drop all charges against them, and refrain from any further arrests, threats or intimidation;
- End the use of police violence against protesters;
- Respect the rights of children and youth to safely and peacefully express their opinions on issues that affect them;
- Review or repeal draconian offences under the Criminal Code such as defamation and sedition, which have been used as tools of fear and reprisal;
- Respect and support media independence and freedom, including through allowing local and international journalists to operate, without any interference or reprisals; and
- Take genuine steps to address the structural violations being raised by the democracy movement.

We call on the international community to stand in solidarity with Thailand's democracy movement, and all our social movements in Asia in our pursuit of government accountability and the protection of human rights.

Signatories:

1. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
2. Asian Resource Foundation (ARF), Thailand
3. Action Committee for Democracy Development, Myanmar
4. Another Alternative, Myanmar
5. ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
6. ASEAN Youth Forum
7. Association for Law, Human Rights and Justice (HAK), Timor-Leste
8. Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), India Administered Jammu and Kashmir
9. Association of Women for Awareness & Motivation (AWAM), Pakistan
10. Athan, Myanmar
11. Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services, Pakistan
12. BALAOD Mindanaw, Philippines
13. Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India
14. Bir Duino, Kyrgyzstan
15. Bytes For All, Pakistan
16. Center for Communication and Development Studies (CCDS), India
17. Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR), India
18. Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia)
19. Covenants Watch, Taiwan
20. Dalit Foundation, India
21. Dignity-Kadyr-kassiyet (Public Association Dignity), Kazakhstan
22. Equality Myanmar, Myanmar
23. Future Light Center, Myanmar
24. Generation Wave, Myanmar

25. Genuine People's Servants, Myanmar
26. Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Association, Myanmar
27. Human Rights Educators Network, Myanmar
28. Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Myanmar
29. Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), Indonesia
30. iDefend, Philippines
31. Indonesia Human rights Monitor (Imparsial), Indonesia
32. Indonesia Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI), Indonesia
33. Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation - Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI), Indonesia
34. Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), Nepal
35. Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), Indonesia
36. International Legal Initiative Public Foundation (ILI Foundation), Kazakhstan
37. Karapatan Alliance Philippines, Philippines
38. Karenni Human Rights Group, Myanmar
39. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (KIBHR), Kazakhstan
40. KontraS (Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence), Indonesia
41. Korean House for International Solidarity (KHIS), South Korea
42. Loka Ahlinn, Myanmar
43. Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), Maldives
44. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS), Myanmar
45. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State), Myanmar
46. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), Pakistan
47. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, Myanmar
48. Odhikar, Bangladesh
49. Paung Ku, Myanmar
50. People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF), Thailand
51. People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), India
52. People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), South Korea
53. People's Watch, India
54. Philippine Collective for Modern Heroism and Active Vista (DAKILA), Philippines
55. Philippines Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), Philippines
56. Progressive Voice, Myanmar
57. Psychological Responsiveness NGO, Mongolia
58. Pusat KOMAS, Malaysia
59. Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh
60. Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia (SHAPE SEA)
61. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Malaysia
62. Synergy (Social Harmony Organization), Myanmar
63. Ta-ang Women's Organization, Myanmar
64. Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR), Taiwan
65. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Philippines

66. The Alliance of Independent Journalists Indonesia (AJI), Indonesia
67. The Seagull, Myanmar
68. Think Centre, Singapore
69. Women Peace Network, Myanmar
70. Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), Nepal
71. Yangon Watch, Myanmar
72. Yayasan Sekretariat Anak Merdeka Indonesiamittee on Human Rights (SAMIN), Indonesia

About FORUM-ASIA:

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a regional network of 81 member organisations across 21 Asian countries, with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity-development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has sub-regional offices in Geneva, Jakarta, and Kathmandu.

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