



Regional Office for South-East Asia

PRESS RELEASE

INCREASING RESTRICTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THAILAND

BANGKOK (3 September 2014) - The United Nations Human Rights Office for South East Asia (OHCHR) is seriously concerned about increasing restrictions on human rights defenders in exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and expression in Thailand.

On Tuesday, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, a local human rights organization, announced the cancellation of an event to release its report on the human rights situation after the 22 May coup in Thailand. The organizers reportedly received phone calls and a letter from the military requesting them to cancel the event. The communications indicated that the event would be considered a violation Announcement No. 7/2557 of the National Council for Peace and Order, prohibiting political gatherings of more than five people.

The cancellation of this event adds to other incidents indicating a deteriorating environment for human rights defenders in the country. In early August, Amnesty International-Thailand was invited to a police station and requested to cancel their planned public events to campaign for the protection of civilians in Gaza. In August, Ms. Pornpen Khongkachonkiet, a prominent human rights defender and the director of the Cross-Cultural Foundation, was summoned by the police for a defamation complaint filed by the army in response to allegations she raised of torture in one case in the south of Thailand.

OHCHR has raised concerns directly with the Government and reiterates its call to the Government to comply with its international human rights obligations. Thailand has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Further, as a member of the United Nations, it should respect the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which provides that everyone has the right to conduct human rights work individually and in association with others (article 1) and provides the right to discuss and bring public attention to human rights situations (article 6).

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The Regional Office for South-East Asia in Bangkok represents the High Commissioner for Human Rights within South East Asia. The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal human rights official of the United Nations. She heads the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which spearheads the United Nations' human rights efforts.

OHCHR website: <http://www.ohchr.org>

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