

Thailand: UN Human Rights Office Recognizes Progress in Enforced Disappearance Case

BANGKOK (9 September 2019) – The UN Human Rights Office for South-East Asia recognizes the important progress by Thailand’s Department of Special Investigation in the enforced disappearance case and recently confirmed murder of Karen community rights activist Pholachi ‘Billy’ Rakchongcharoen.

“The location and identification of Billy’s remains is a significant step in the criminal investigation of this heinous crime and the right to truth for the family,” said Cynthia Veliko, the Office’s Regional Representative.

Pholachi Rakchongcharoen was last seen alive 17 April 2014 in the custody of national park officials who detained him at the checkpoint of Kaeng Krachan National Park for allegedly possessing wild honey. Park officials claimed he was released later the same day.

On 6 September 2019, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) announced that skull fragments found inside an oil drum in a reservoir near the Kaeng Krachan Dam belonged to Pholachi Rakchongcharoen.

“It is critical to now move rapidly to complete the investigation of this case and bring the perpetrators who murdered ‘Billy’ to justice and to uphold the right to truth and redress for the victims and their families,” Veliko said.

The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has remained engaged with DSI on ‘Billy’s case and those of others who have disappeared, including Somchai Neelapaijit, a human rights lawyer last seen in 2004.

OHCHR has advocated with the Royal Government of Thailand to urgently adopt national legislation that is in line with international standards, criminalizing torture and enforced disappearances and to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

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