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Thailand: Inter-Parliamentary Union must urge Thailand to stop persecution of dissenting former parliamentarians

As the Inter Parliamentary Union begins its 133rd Assembly, Amnesty International urges delegates to address grave human rights problems in Thailand, including the penalizing of former parliamentarians and severe restrictions on their ability to critically engage in political debate and discussion. Delegates should call on Thai authorities to put a stop to the arbitrary arrest, intimidation and prosecution of former parliamentarians and other peaceful critics, and lift powers allowing arbitrary restrictions on human rights that are undermining free participation in the country's delayed "road map to democracy."

Arbitrary detentions of former parliamentarians and others for peacefully expressing opinions or for their political association, have continued since the military seized power on 22 May 2014. Scores of former parliamentarians have been detained. Two former Members of Parliament (MP) - Karun Hosakul and Pichai Nariphaphan –were held incommunicado for days in September 2015, in response to their criticism of the authorities and are the latest publicly known former parliamentarians to be detained arbitrarily in unofficial places of detention, without charge or trial for what the authorities refer to as "attitude adjustment" for up to week to "ensure their cooperation."

Chaturon Chaisaeng, former Deputy Prime Minister, is facing charges for treason in a military court, without the right to appeal, for peacefully expressing his opposition to the coup and refusing to obey military orders that he should report to them. Former MPs are among hundreds of people subjected to restrictive conditions imposed on their release from arbitrary detention, which prevent them from engaging in "political activities" on pain of facing prosecution and imprisonment. Former MPs who have failed to report to the army have been subjected to arbitrary penalties, including the freezing of their assets, and at least three former MPs have had their passports cancelled.

Amnesty International calls upon the IPU to urge Thailand to abolish legal provisions that permit sweeping restrictions on the exercise of human rights, including powers to arbitrarily detain peaceful critics. While the military promised that these, and other measures violating Thailand's international human rights obligations on peaceful assembly, expression and fair trials, would only be temporary they have instead extended their powers to impose oppressive measures. Furthermore, the military government has,

not indicated a time frame for when these powers will be revoked. Lifting the powers to detain arbitrarily and violate other human rights is particularly necessary as the current interim constitution fails to adequately protect rights. The military authorities' "road map to democracy" remains delayed after a military appointed body's rejection of the draft for a new constitution. It also remains unclear when a new constitution will be in place, and serious doubts remain as to whether it will meet Thailand's international human rights obligations. The Thai authorities must allow a free environment in which former parliamentarians and every other Thai citizen feel able to peacefully speak or protest, on the constitution, government policies or any other issue, without fear of being penalized.