

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

**Index: ASA 39/1699/2015
22 May 2015**

Thailand: A year on – “temporary” suppression has become permanent

On the anniversary of the army seizing power in a military coup, Amnesty International (AI) renews calls on the Thai authorities to act immediately to repeal repressive laws and end policies and practices violating Thailand’s international human rights obligations. The authorities should restore constitutional protection of human rights and end impunity for perpetrators of violations.

While authorities have given a timeline for steps towards elections, now slated for end of August 2016 at the earliest, they have given no indication when they will lift repressive restrictions on the rights to liberty and the peaceful exercise of rights, including on involvement in political activities.

Concurrently with lifting martial law in April 2015 in all areas of the country apart from those where it was already in force when imposed in May 2014, authorities have retained identical, if not more draconian, unchecked and sweeping powers under the interim Constitution, to deny or excessively restrict human rights in the name of security, without administrative review.

National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) ordinances criminalizing the political gatherings of more than five persons and the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression have contributed to an atmosphere of self-censorship and fear. This has been compounded by ongoing prosecutions for acts of peaceful dissent in military courts, in violation of fair trial rights, as well as informal pressure and public threats by authorities, including the Prime Minister, against media and civil society who voice criticism. This combination of repressive measures has compromised the ability of individuals seeking to uphold and represent concerns about their and others’ human rights.

AI urges the authorities to, immediately and unconditionally release, drop charges against and expunge sentences of anyone detained, prosecuted or penalized solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights to freedom of expression and assembly. More than 100 civilians are reported to have been prosecuted in military courts, including for acts of non-violent dissent, many of them with no right of appeal. Scores have been sentenced to up to 50 years for acts of peaceful self-expression under Article 112 of the Penal Code, which allows for up to 15 years imprisonment for a single act deemed to insult the King, Queen, Heir Apparent or Regent.

The organization also calls on authorities to repeal the army’s powers, initially under martial law and currently under an NCPO decree, to detain persons for “attitude adjustment” lasting up to seven days in unofficial locations and incommunicado detention, which may have facilitated incidents of torture

Authorities must also cease to impose conditions for release from such arbitrary detention and other imprisonment, which constrain hundreds of persons from engaging in political activities with the threat of renewed imprisonment. Current conditions imposed on hundreds of people for maintaining their liberty must be lifted. Other powers extended by authorities in April 2015 to appointed “peace and order maintenance officers” including to search without warrant, must also be repealed

Further, authorities must ensure that when implementing official orders issued during the last year governing the management of natural resources, including forests, the army does not forcibly evict rural communities. Scores of rural communities have been evicted, some

reportedly forcibly.

AI further urges authorities to transfer all civilians currently before military courts to civilian jurisdiction, ensure state officials are accountable for human rights violations in law and practice, and deliver justice and reparations for those who have been affected by human rights violations during the last year including arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearances.