

Reflecting on Bangkok and Chiang Mai Pride 2023: Celebrating LGBTQI+ Community: Embracing Diversity, Building a Just, Equal, and Fair Society

In a striking and invigorating proclamation, the LGBTQI+ community of Chiang Mai, Bangkok and throughout Thailand asserts the ownership of its dreams. These dreams encompass acceptance, equality and justice, resonating deeply within their hearts and igniting a passionate pursuit of change. They acknowledge the scars inflicted upon them by societal discrimination, wounds that penetrate physical, mental, and spiritual realms. Yet, rising above their pain, they stand united in hope, forming a resplendent procession of pride for Thailand and the world.

The rainbow flag of the Pride Parade accompanies all, symbol of both celebration and resistance. It becomes a powerful channel for expressing pride in diverse identities and gender expressions. Beyond the kaleidoscopic spectacle, however, it flags a moment to listen to and heed the voices of those who have endured discrimination, violence, and exclusion. It announces a time to acknowledge the persisting pain and pledge to strive for a society that embraces inclusivity, dignity, and the tenets of human rights.

*At the forefront of this year's parade emerge transgender youth, gender non-conforming individuals, and allies. They embody the collective struggle for legally recognised gender identity, marriage equality, and the right to practice their chosen professions — **a demand that must be recognised in the Thai constitution.** Their presence signifies a commitment to upholding the dignity of people who have self-identified while simultaneously challenging entrenched gender stereotypes. These individuals are taking on the role of trailblazers, pushing Thai society toward a future that transcends the boundaries of binary frameworks and wholeheartedly embraces the limitless spectrum of human potential and social diversity. - **Pranom Somwong, Protection International in Thailand.***

Protection International, in collaboration with various people's movements in Thailand, calls for and works towards the acknowledgement of the importance of all LGBTQI+ persons as an integral part of society that go beyond the queer community and strive for a better society driven by all women in all their diversity. The enshrined fundamental

rights and freedoms of people should at all costs be protected and respected, guaranteeing the LGBTQI+ community's right to assembly. Where they can enjoy their right to convene, converse, and collectively protest, empowering their voices to reverberate, whether in jubilant celebration or firm condemnation of injustice.

Protection International especially supports women to step into their power to resist and defend their rights and their environment. For instance, Sunthorn from The Network of the People, a trans woman, is staunchly defending her community and protecting our planet from the perils of [harmful mining operations](#).

Another HRD, [Natthapan Saengtab](#), is a steering committee member of the remarkable Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT). She identifies as a lesbian woman who ardently advocates for land rights, democracy, and social justice.

During Bangkok Pride, we also listened intently to LGBTQI+ activists from Myanmar, as they courageously shed light on their desperate plight under a repressive military regime. Their voices call upon the international community to stand in solidarity with women and transgender persons of Myanmar, to provide substantial support to address their dire circumstances, and to hold perpetrators of violence against the LGBTQI+ community accountable.

The collective conviction of this movement remains steadfast and unwavering, grounded in hope and pride. The parade leaders of Bangkok and Chiang Mai Pride 2023 embody the essence of catalysts for change, destined to reshape societal norms and challenge the pervasive culture of gender oppression. They lead the way towards a future that encompasses not only economic, environmental, and cultural realms, but also redefines the boundaries of a just and fair society that embraces diversity and promotes equality to contribute to the holistic progress and well-being of our people and nation. In this vision, members of the LGBTQI+ community embody hope for a brighter future for all.

As we look ahead to 2028, our aspirations soar even higher. The LGBTQI+ collective resolve is to officially host World Pride, a global event that will not only show case Bangkok's vibrant culture but also invigorate the economy, shape society, and establish the city as a beacon of leadership for the ASEAN region to transform society.

Amidst this resonating call for change and celebration, the work of Protection International is a testament to our unwavering commitment to human rights defenders. As an organisation with a legacy of safeguarding defenders, we stand by the rights of the LGBTQI+ community.

Let us stand in unwavering solidarity, amplifying their voices, and working hand in hand to create a world where dreams of acceptance, fairness, and justice become an enduring reality, vibrant and resplendent in all its colourful glory.