



Concept note

Activity: Public Event/ Panel discussion *“The Struggles of land and environmental rights defenders in Thailand: Challenges and Ways Forward”*

Date: 09:00 am – 12: 00 pm, 9 March 2016, Tuesday

Place: Foreign Correspondence Club Thailand (FCCT), Bangkok, Thailand

Organisers: Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT), Community Resource Center, Amnesty International Thailand, Focus on the Global South, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Protection International

Background

Since the 2014 coup, life in Thailand has become increasingly regulated. Community-based human rights defenders (HRDs) and their support groups have repeatedly expressed their concerns over the lack of participation in national reform and lack of community rights. Almost two years since the coup, the safe space to address their concerns has been drastically compromised. No matter how non-violent their activities are, they are continue to be targeted and harassed by the state.

Many HRDs in Thailand are systematically targeted, prosecuted, attacked, and in extreme cases even killed as reprisals for their peaceful human rights work, particularly on community-level issues of land rights, environment and natural resource management. Events focusing on land right, environment and natural resource management have been forcefully cancelled or have been monitored by police and military. In 2015, FORUM-ASIA documented at least 14 cases of violations against HRDs working on land rights and natural resource, including killing of land rights defender Mr. Chai Bunthonglek. He is the fourth Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT) member in Klong Sai Pattana to be killed since 2010.

The attacks faced by defenders highlight the lack of effective mechanisms to protect HRDs, particularly those operating in rural areas with limited resources and access to remedies. Mr. Chai’s killing and previous attacks against SPFT members are not isolated incidents in Thailand, but they are part of a broader patterns of grave human rights violations in the country. These violations are also an indicator of the increasing tensions and confrontations between business or corporations and communities affected by business activities.

In response to the increasing challenges faced by HRDs in Thailand, Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT), Community Resource Center (CRC), Amnesty International Thailand, Focus on the Global South, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Protection International will co-organise a panel discussion *“The Struggles of land and environmental rights defenders in Thailand: Challenges and Ways Forward”*. The panel discussion will assess the current protection measures available in Thailand and suggest more effective ways to ensure the safety of HRDs on the ground.



Objectives

- Increase awareness on situations faced by land and environmental rights defenders in Thailand to national and international media based in Bangkok, Thailand
- Discuss and pinpoint areas of lack of institutional mechanisms in protection of land rights defenders in Thailand

Programme

9:00 - 9:30	Registration
9:30 – 9:50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A short video on the SPFT and community members (5 mins) - Testimony from family member of Mr. Chai Bunthonglek (5 mins)
9:50 – 11:30	<p>Panel Discussion (including Q&A session)</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A member of the Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT)</i> - <i>Ms. Sor. Rattanamanee Polkla, Community Resource Centre (CRC)</i> - <i>Dr. Niran Pitakwatchara, Former Commissioner of National Human Rights Commission of Thailand</i> - <i>Ministry of Justice (TBC)</i> - <i>Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, Southeast Asia (TBC)</i> <p>Moderator: FORUM-ASIA (TBC)</p>
11:30 – 11:50	<p>Solidarity statements from supporting communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>People's Movement for a Just Society (P-move)</i> - <i>Pak Moon Community</i> - <i>Four Regions Slum Network</i> - <i>Land Reform Network of Isan (LRNI)</i> - <i>Andaman Resources Restoration (ARR)</i>