

THE PEOPLE'S NETWORK AGAINST THE WORLD BANK AND IMF

Who we are and why the peaceful mobilisation in Bangkok matters | October 2026

Who we are

The People's Network Against the World Bank and IMF is a broad coalition of grassroots movements across Thailand: farmers and landless communities; workers; urban poor and railway-side communities; Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities; women human rights defenders (WHRDs); environmental defenders; people affected by dams, mining, power plants and industrial development; people living with HIV; persons with disabilities; and women and other care workers. These movements have different histories, but share a concern that economic and development decisions affecting their lives are often made without their meaningful participation or decision-making power.

Why these communities are mobilising

The Network challenges the neoliberal development model associated with the World Bank and IMF, including debt-driven development, privatisation, market liberalisation and the concentration of control over land and resources. For its members, these debates concern lived experiences: displacement, loss of fishing and farming livelihoods, environmental harm, insecure work, household debt, weakened public services and unpaid care burdens borne disproportionately by women. The 1997 Asian financial crisis and subsequent economic restructuring remain important collective memories. The Network does not attribute every community problem to these institutions; it questions the wider structures through which international finance, state policy and private capital shape development priorities.

Why the 15–16 October protests matter

During the IMF–World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok (12–18 October 2026), the Network plans to mobilise more than 1,000 human rights defenders and members of their grassroots collectives from across Thailand, with women human rights defenders expected to constitute the majority. Organisers plan peaceful demonstrations on 15–16 October, a march towards the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center and an overnight protest presence nearby. These are planned numbers and activities, not confirmed attendance.

This mobilisation brings together struggles often treated separately—land, environment, labour, social protection, gender equality, Indigenous Peoples' rights and economic democracy. It is an opportunity for people who live with the consequences of development decisions to be heard by those who influence them. It also seeks to reclaim historical memory and affirm that meaningful participation requires a voice in deciding economic futures, not merely being consulted after decisions are made.

Why UN attention and protection matter

The Network has publicly affirmed its commitment to peaceful and unarmed assembly and is undertaking notification procedures under Thailand's Public Assembly Act 2015, which requires notification rather than prior permission. Yet organisers have reported surveillance, intimidation and interference ahead of the meetings. Their concerns are heightened by police violence during the 2022 APEC protests, when a demonstrator lost sight in one eye; the National Human Rights Commission subsequently identified failures in the policing of a largely peaceful assembly and recommended safeguards and accountability.

Under Article 21 of the ICCPR, Thai authorities must respect and facilitate peaceful assembly. The high expected participation of WHRDs makes protection against gendered intimidation and reprisals especially important. UN attention and independent observation can help prevent violence, support dialogue and ensure that communities can peacefully challenge the policies affecting their lives. The central question is whether people most affected by development will be able to speak, assemble and demand accountability safely and visibly.

"Stop destructive capital. People must determine their own future."