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Call to stop the Political Repression and Human Rights Violations in Thailand

On 20 May 2014, the state military deposed the government of Thailand, imposed Martial Law nationwide in a successful military coup led by General Prayuth Chan-ocha, outlawed political activities and cracked down on peaceful opposition through martial rule over criticism of its policies.

Despite initially proclaiming that the elections would likely take place around the end of 2015, the military junta, hanging on to powers, has delayed the elections for several times until early 2019.

On 6 April 2017, the military drafted the constitution, limited the power of political parties should elections be held and ensured military's continuing control by giving the military power to appoint all 250-members of the Upper House.

The elections were called on 24 March 2019, in a highly unfavorable set up under the new constitution, with a continuing ban on political activities and crackdown on the opposition with laws including the hostility to constitutional monarchy, Computer Crimes Act, and the Cyber Security Act.

Despite the opposition parties winning more seats, the incumbent Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha retained his cling on power. Thailand's election in eight years which was billed as the return of democracy in the country was marred by allegations of systemic rigging, vote irregularities, questionable rulings by the military-appointed election commission, and the lengthy delay in announcing final tallies and seat-allocation computation formula.



The Future Forward Party (FWP)'s mandate of 81 seats in parliament, along with seats won by other pro-democracy parties, resonates the call of Thai citizenry for the return of democracy in the country.

The situation in post-election Thailand did not hint a return to proper democracy, protection of human rights, justified rule of law or stability, but continued repression of democracy and violations of human rights. These include the cases of threats and physical assault on pro-transparency activists Sirawith Seritiwat (Ja New) and Ekachai Hongkangwan; the case of the disappearance of activists Chucheeep Chivasut, Siam Theerawut and KritsanaThapthai; the case of Anurak Jeantawanich (Ford), who was charged with the controversial Computer Crime Acts, for having criticised the military junta through his social media posts on February 10, 2019; the case of FWP Leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, Secretary General Piyabutr Saengkanokkul, and Party Spokesperson Pannika Wanich, who were charged with various cases demonstrating harassment and intimidation to the political opposition.

A pending case against FWP Leader Thanathorn is in motion to strip him of his status as Member of Parliament permanently. Similarly, a case against FWP, for having challenged the military government in the elections, is geared towards having the opposition party dissolved.

The case of Thailand underscores the shrinking of civic and political spaces, the intensifying repression of democratic forces, and the continuing violations of human rights in several countries in Asia, most evident in Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia and Myanmar.

- The Network for Social Democracy in Asia (SocDem Asia) and the Progressive Alliance (PA) assert that democracy and socialism can only be fully realised not only by reforming the state but also by upholding and protecting human rights and democracy in everyday life through vibrant civil society and engaged citizenry.
- SocDem Asia and the Progressive Alliance call out on regimes that threaten democracy and human rights in the region. We call



attention to the human rights violations against citizens, activists and repression of the opposition in Thailand.

- SocDem Asia and the Progressive Alliance work together with its member parties in the region and sister parties and organisations around the world to combat populism and authoritarianism that threatens democracy and human rights.
- SocDem Asia and the Progressive Alliance stand in solidarity with the Future Forward Party, along with democratic forces and human rights activists in Thailand.
- SocDem Asia and the Progressive Alliance call for an immediate moratorium on the death penalty in Thailand with a view to the abolition of the same.
- SocDem Asia and the Progressive Alliance urge the authorities of Thailand as the Chair of ASEAN until 2019 to lead by example in relation to human rights and democratic values.