

We Condemn the Thailand Coup that Threatens Democracy and Human Rights under the Title of 'Peace Restoration'

Two days after the announcement that martial law had been put in force was made on May 20th, a military junta, named the National Order Maintenance Council (NOMC), led a coup and subsequently installed itself as the government of Thailand. Over the course of the six months of anti-government protests, twenty-eight people had been killed and more than eight-hundred injured. Hence, we are gravely concerned about the on-going human rights violations and the regression of democracy in Thailand. Furthermore, we strongly demand the Thailand military junta immediately release all detainees and cease the commitment of human rights violations.

General Prayuth Chan-ocha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, declared the coup in order to "restore peace", and he was endorsed as the leader of the country by the King on May 25th. The military junta, however, dissolved the senate, implemented intensive media control, and arrested a great number of citizens who had participated in protests raising their voice against the military regime. These are not the consequences of an act to "restore peace" in any sense, but rather an act to suspend the freedom of Thai citizens and to impede democracy. In addition, it is not a democratic country if the King has the right to approve a coup that abrogated constitutionalism with guns and knives.

The military junta has set out oppressing human rights defenders by issuing summons not only to the anti-junta politicians but also to human right defenders, journalists, and scholars. According to various media sources, approximately two hundreds summons have been issued so far, and roughly between one hundred and two hundreds arrests were made as a consequence. The wife and son of Mr. Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, a well-known journalist who has so far served three years of an eleven year sentence after being convicted of Lèse Majesté, were also arrested on May 25th. His wife and son were released one day later only after being ordered not to participate in any political activities. The whereabouts of an unknown number of other detainees are still unknown as are the exact charges being brought against them. This is clearly a violation of Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Thailand is a State Party.

Moreover, the military junta made sure that they seized full control of the media at the time of the growing turmoil, thus limiting access to sincere and objective information to the public exactly when it is most necessary. For example, regular programming was cancelled in order for the military broadcast to be aired on radio and television, and the military junta established a special

committee to control and monitor Social Network Service. This shows that the current regime not only hides truth by controlling the media but also blocks the free expression of the public.

The Korean government made a statement on May 22nd that it is, "deeply concerned about the current situation of the suspension of the constitution in Thailand and expects that a democratic government that reflects the voice of Thai citizens can be established at the earliest possible moment." We suggest that the Korean government, who has a firm cooperative relationship with Thailand through such endeavors as defense exports, back-up its statement of concern with an actual act, such as 'ending the military cooperation.' Otherwise we will proceed with our campaigns, such as calling for the Korean government to end its support for the Thai military junta by bringing together Korea's civil society to exchange ideas on this important matter.

The apparent impediment of democracy in Thailand has a great impact on all Asians, including Koreans. Thailand is a highly popular holiday destination for many Koreans every year. The local situation in Thailand can easily be disregarded while seeking pleasure during what should be a relaxing vacation, yet this serious matter is worth being reflected upon for it is happening to our fellow Asians. We strongly appeal to Korean citizens to become more actively engaged for the hopeful reconciliation of democracy in Thailand.

In 2010, about ninety people were killed and approximately 1,700 people were injured during the clash between the protesters and the military. Korean Civil Society is very much afraid of the possibility of further mass violence. A military coup that suppresses the freedom of people cannot be justified even if it has the King's approval. Therefore we strongly support the struggle of Thai citizens against the military junta, and we demand the following:

- The Thai military junta must immediately stop the arbitrary detention of human rights defenders.
- The Thai military junta must abolish Lèse Majesté and immediately release all political detainees held under this charge, as well as other prisoners of conscience.
- The Thai military junta must guarantee the freedom of the media and allow the free expression of all Thai citizens.
- The Thai military junta must assure the freedom of assembly and the right to protest.
- The sovereignty belongs to Thai citizens. The military junta must immediately transfer

power to a civil government.

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Advocates for Public Interest Law/Catholic Human Rights Committee/DASAN Human Rights Center/Human Rights Law Foundation Gong Gam/Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea/Korea Center for United Nations Human Rights Policy/Korean Chemical and Textile Workers' Federation/Korean Confederation of Trade Unions/Korean Health and Medical Workers' Union /Korean House for International Solidarity/Korean Lawyers for Public Interest and Human Rights/Korean Metal Workers' Union/Network for Glocal Activism/People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy/ODA Watch/People's Solidarity for Social Progress/Worker's Solidarity

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