

# Thailand: Stop the harassment and arbitrary arrest of peaceful anti-coup protestors

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## 24 June 2014

Paris, 24 June 2014: Thailand's military junta, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), must immediately stop the harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention of peaceful anti-coup protestors, FIDH said today.

"Under the current military junta, Thailand is exhibiting the all too familiar features of a police state. After silencing the media, political opposition, activists, and human rights defenders, the junta has hit new depths of paranoia by cracking down on peaceful and spontaneous forms of dissent as symbolic as reading a book, eating a sandwich or wearing a t-shirt," said FIDH President Karim Lahidji.

In the first month since it seized power on 22 May, police and military authorities in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai arrested at least 53 people for holding peaceful demonstrations against the coup d'état.

In many cases, authorities arrested protestors, including students and elderly women, for holding anti-coup signs, staging silent readings of George Orwell's novel '1984', wearing t-shirts calling for peace or elections, doing a three-finger salute, and holding sandwich-eating protests. In order to prevent further protests, authorities also encouraged vigilantism. On 23 June, a police high-ranking official said police would give a 500-baht (US\$15) reward for each photo that leads to the arrest of individuals expressing their opposition to the coup.

Most of those arrested in connection with peaceful anti-coup protests have been released on bail. However, military and civilian courts have already initiated criminal proceedings against at least 18 of them.

"The junta has attempted to sugar coat its ongoing human rights abuses by calling arbitrary detentions 'invitations' or 'cooling-off periods'. The reality is that the ongoing crackdown on peaceful dissent is a blatant violation of Thailand's international legal obligations," said Mr.Lahidji. "Until the junta allows people to express their opposition to the coup in a legitimate and peaceful manner, any appeal for national reconciliation will ring hollow," he added.

The UN Working Groups on Arbitrary Detention defines a detention as arbitrary when the deprivation of liberty results from the exercise of the rights guaranteed by Articles 19 (right to freedom of expression) and 21 (right to freedom of peaceful assembly) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Thailand is a State party.

**FIDH urges the international community to demand that the NCPO:**

- Immediately lift martial law.
- Ensure its actions conform with Thailand's international human rights obligations.
- Cease all harassment, arbitrary arrests, and detentions of individuals using provisions of martial law.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all those who remain detained.
- Lift media censorship and all other restrictions to the right to freedom of expression, movement, and peaceful assembly.
- Enact a constitution that is drafted through a time-bound, inclusive, and transparent process and that is subject to approval through a referendum.

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