

29 January 2018

Thailand: Lawsuit filed against participants of We Walk... Solidarity's human rights march

On 23 January 2018, a lawsuit was filed against eight human rights defenders who are members of the **We Walk... Solidarity** campaign and march. They are accused of breaching Article 12 of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) Order No. 3/2558 (NCPO Order 3/2015), which states that political gatherings of five or more persons shall be punished with either a prison sentence of up to six months, a fine not exceeding ten thousand Baht, and/or both, unless permission has been granted by the Head of the NCPO or an authorised representative.

We Walk...Solidarity is a collaborative campaign between a wide range of groups including the **Health Security Watch** group and **People Movement for Social Welfare, Alternative Agriculture Network, National Recourse Network** and the **Academic and Lawyer Network**. The aim of the campaign is to shed light on the human rights violations caused by the increasing suppression of the right to freedom of expression, the growing influence of the military government, and the situation of human rights in Thailand. The main action of the We Walk...Solidarity campaign's activism is a walk from Bangkok to Khon Khaen, a journey of about 450 kilometers that will take approximately twenty-eight days.

On 23 January 2018, a lawsuit was filed by Lieutenant Colonel (Lt.Col) Prusit Khalyhiran for eight members of the campaign under NCPO Order Number 3/2558 for participating in the walk on 19 and 20 January at Thammasat University (Rangsit campus). Warrants were issued for [Lertsak Kumkongsak](#) from Campaign for Public Policy on Mineral Resources (PPM), **Nimit Tieudom, Somchai Grajanseang** and **Sangsiri Teemanka** from AIDS Access, **Nutchanart Thanthong** and **Jumnong Nupian** from Four Regions Slum Network, **Dr. Anusorn Aunno** from Network for Civil Rights, and **Ubon Yuwa** from Alternative Agricultural Network. The defenders will report to the police on 28 January 2018 at Klong Luang Police Station with their lawyer.

On 20 January 2018, three teams of four persons, mostly composed by women, began walking separately from Bangkok to Khon Khaen. Teams take turns walking the route with each team consisting of just four walkers, so as not to breach Thailand's law that prevents the assembly or procession of five or more persons. Despite this, the Walk has already been hindered by authorities, in particular by the NCPO and Royal Thai Police.

After seizing power in a 2014 coup, the NCPO has maintained its grip on the country through an array of restrictive laws. The junta's intolerance for dissenting opinions has resulted in a challenging climate for human rights defenders. Judicial harassment, which remains one of the most common tools to silence human rights defenders has intensified, with defamation and other criminal and civil charges being brought against them.

Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing judicial harassment of the eight human rights defenders belonging to the We Walk...Solidarity campaign, as it strongly believes that it is directly linked to their peaceful and legitimate work as a human rights defenders in Thailand.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Thailand to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against the eight human rights defenders as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defense of human rights;
2. Allow the We Walk campaign's march to proceed without further restrictions and harassment;
3. Review its existing legislation with a view to lifting undue restrictions on freedom of assembly;
4. Guarantee that human rights defenders in Thailand are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.