

28 June 2019

Thailand: Sirawith "Ja New" Seritiwat in critical condition after being assaulted

On 28 June 2019, pro-democracy human rights defender **Sirawith "Ja New" Seritiwat** was assaulted by four unidentified men as he was leaving his home in Bangkok's Klong Sam Wa district. He sustained serious head injuries and has been admitted to the ICU at Navamin 1 Hospital, where he remains unresponsive and in critical condition.

Sirawith Seritiwat is a pro-democracy human rights defender involved in the New Democracy Movement. He began his advocacy while he was a student at Thammasat University and has actively spoken up against the undemocratic rule of the military regime in Thailand.

On 28 June 2019, at around 11.30am, Sirawith Seritiwat was ambushed by four unidentified men as he was leaving his house near Klong Sam Wa district in Bangkok. The men hit him with baseball bats and left him bleeding and unconscious on the pavement. A few bystanders came to his aid before the ambulance arrived. Witnesses report that the attackers were wearing helmets and rode away in motorcycles without license plates.

Sirawith Seritiwat was admitted to Navamin 1 Hospital at around 11.50am and it was found that he had sustained fractures in his skull as well as a broken nose and eye socket. Doctors transferred him to the ICU at around 2pm due to his persistent unresponsiveness.

This is the second time Sirawith Seritiwat has been assaulted in the past month. On 2 June 2019, at around 10pm, a group of five helmeted men attacked him with wooden sticks on Ratchadaphisek Road in Din Daeng district, in the middle of a busy street. The attack only ceased after a few passers-by intervened. Nonetheless, the human rights defender sustained injuries to his face and head.

Attacks against pro-democracy human rights defenders have been increasing in the past few months in the context of Thailand's general elections in March, the process and results of which have come under intense scrutiny and critique by observers. The latest assault against Sirawith Seritiwat is part of this worrying trend of escalating violence against pro-democracy human rights defenders in Thailand.

At the end of March, Ekachai Hongkangwan's car was set ablaze by unknown assailants and Anurak Jeantawanich was assaulted by unidentified men outside his home. The two human rights defenders had just returned from a campaign calling for more transparency in the election process. Ekachai Hongkangwan and Anurak Jeantawanich were assaulted again with heightened violence on 13 May 2019 and 25 May 2019 respectively by unidentified assailants.

Front Line Defenders condemns the attacks against Sirawith Seritiwat, which it believes to be a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights work, specifically on democratisation in Thailand. Front Line Defenders further expresses grave concern about the escalation in attacks against human rights defenders advocating for democracy in the country.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Thailand to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assaults against Sirawith Seritiwat, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and

security of Sirawith Seritiwat;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Thailand are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 12 (2): "*The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration*" and to Article 18 (2): "*Individuals, groups, and non-governmental organisations have an important role to play and a responsibility in safeguarding democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributing to the promotion and advancement of democratic societies, institutions and processes.*"

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director