

Thailand: There should be no seat at the UN Security Council for a non-democratic country with a troubling rights record

(Geneva, 27 June 2016) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) urges the UN General Assembly (UN GA) to carefully consider Thailand's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC). Its candidacy for the term 2017-2018 is questionable given the deteriorating human rights situation under the military Government in the country.

Peace and security; development; and human rights are the three essential pillars of the United Nations (UN). They are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. UNSC's decisions on international peace and security, will affect human rights. While deteriorating human rights situations also threaten international peace and security. Given this, it is key that members of the Council fulfil their international human rights obligations.

Thailand's aide-memoir¹ for its candidature declares that human rights is one of the main components of peace and security in the world and asserts that the Government values human rights commitments at regional and international human rights platforms. However, Thailand is yet to adopt this view domestically.

After the coup in 2014, fundamental freedoms of the Thai people have been severely restricted under the military rule. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is curbed under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) order No.3/2558 (3/2015),² which prohibits public gathering of more than five people.

The curtailment of the right to freedom of expression, both offline and online,³ establishment of an 'attitude adjustment' programme to silence dissenters and critics, and the use of military courts to try civilians without any appellate procedure⁴, are among the abusive practices used to suppress fundamental freedoms in the country.

The Armed forces were granted sweeping powers to act as law enforcement officers under the NCPO order No.13/2559 (13/2016).⁵ Last week alone, 13 students and labour activists were arrested for breaching Article 61 of the Referendum Act, which puts a blanket ban on public discussions or information distribution about the draft constitution and forthcoming referendum.⁶ If the arrested students and activists are found guilty, they may face a prison sentence of up to 10 years.

¹ <http://www.thaiembassy.org/unmissionnewyork/en/relation/53893-Thailand-Candidature-for-UNSC.html>.

² <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=20061>.

³ <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18371>.

⁴ <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18741>.

⁵ <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=20537>.

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/UNHumanRightsAsia/photos/a.657330534369993.1073741828.654755261294187/753079058128473/?type=3&theater>

“The international community should not entertain the Thai military Government’s lip service to human rights. If Thailand aspires to be a non-permanent member of the UNSC, Thailand must fulfil its international human rights obligations, particularly those under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Thailand is a state-party. It must improve the human rights situation at home and restore democracy,” says Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

FORUM-ASIA thus calls on the UN GA to carefully consider Thailand’s bid for a non-permanent seat on the UNSC. If Thailand is successful with its candidature, the UNGA will be once again endorsing a non-democratic Government with a troubling human rights record.

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.

[1] www.thaiembassy.org/unmissionnewyork/en/relation/53893-Thailand-Candidature-for-UNSC.html.

[2] www.forum-asia.org/?p=20061.

[3] www.forum-asia.org/?p=18371.

[4] www.forum-asia.org/?p=18741.

[5] www.forum-asia.org/?p=20537.

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