



ANNI – Thailand: Recent Developments Show the Urgent Need for Structural Changes of NHRCT

The Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) is greatly concerned with alarming developments within the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT). A clear sign of internal conflict within the NHRCT emerged after one of the Commissioners, Surachet Satitniramai, resigned due to dissatisfaction with the management and the working system under the administration of the current Chairperson.¹ In response to Surachet’s resignation, the Chairperson stated that the vacant Commissioner’s post will not be filled until the entry into force of the Organic Law or the issuance of a new Order.²

We are concerned that not only this reaffirms the poor standards of the selection and appointment process of the NHRCT, but also will further restrict effective performance of the Commission given the delay in appointing a new Commissioner.

ANNI previously assessed that the lack of a participatory, transparent, and merit-based selection process for NHRCT’s Commissioners was to affect the credibility of, and public confidence in the Commission.³ Of the nominees in 2015, only one candidate, Angkhana Neelapaijit, had clear expertise or experience in the area of human rights.

ANNI calls on the current leadership of the NHRCT to strengthen the effective performance of what was supposed to be a credible and independent institution for the promotion and protection of human rights in Thailand. Instead of focusing on majority or minority position on resolutions taken by the Commission,⁴ it is now the time for the Chairperson to address the issue of pluralism in the composition of the NHRCT, which is fundamentally linked to the requirement of independence, credibility, effectiveness, and accessibility.

With regard to engagement with civil society and international stakeholders in the protection of human rights, ANNI is of the view that this will lead to greater public legitimacy as well as better understanding of human rights issues by the NHRCT.⁵ Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) has also noted that engagement with international bodies is an important dimension of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)’s work, through which NHRIs reinforce their independence and effectiveness.⁶

During these critical times of human rights protection in Thailand, ANNI strongly calls on the NHRCT to conduct themselves with a heightened level of independence and effectiveness. Structural changes within the NHRCT are indisputably required to guarantee a Paris Principles-compliant Commission. Key issues within the Commission must be addressed through the new organic law of the NHRCT that is

1 The Nation, [Surachet quits to highlight problems within NHRC](#).

2 NHRCT, [Statement by the Chairperson of the NHRCT regarding Resignation of the Commissioner](#).

3 FORUM-ASIA, [ANNI - Thailand: Flawed Selection Process Leads to Controversial Human Rights Commission](#).

4 NHRCT, [Statement by the Chairperson of the NHRCT regarding Resignation of the Commissioner](#), Point 5.

5 GANHRI, [General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation](#).

6 GANHRI, [General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation](#).

currently being drafted. This includes, among others, better provisions on the selection and appointment process of the Commissioners; functional immunity; ability to address human rights issues in a timely manner; and independence and neutrality.

The current conflict within the Commission, and what has been reported as a weak leadership of the Chairperson, will further hold back the fulfilment of the purpose of the NHRCT, being an independent body mandated to promote and protect human rights in Thailand. ANNI reiterates its long-standing concerns that the new organic law on the NHRCT needs to be in full compliance with the Paris Principles,⁷ and that the Thai Government is responsible for ensuring the existence of a Paris Principles-compliant NHRCT.

About the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI):

The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI has members that are national organisations from all over Asia. ANNI currently has 33 member organisations from 21 countries or territories. The work of ANNI members focuses on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI).

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⁷[The Paris Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions](#)