

Thailand: Detention of Jatupat “Pai” Boonpattaraksa continues, suppression intensifies

(Geneva, 22 June 2017) – Today marks six months of detention for Jatupat “Pai” Boonpattaraksa, a prominent student activist who has been charged with lèse majesté offences under article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code and violation of the Computer Crime Act since 22 December 2016. Pai was arrested on 3 December 2016 after sharing on Facebook a biographical article from BBC Thai on King Rama X. He was released on bail on 4 December 2016 but his bail was revoked on 22 December 2016. Since then several new bail applications have been submitted and all have been rejected.

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) condemns the arbitrary detention of Pai and echoes the call from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of expression and opinion (UNSR on freedom of expression), David Kaye, to revise the Criminal Code and repeal the law that criminalises free speech. FORUM-ASIA expresses further concern on recent threats and intimidations against other political activists and human rights defenders by the authorities.

Lèse majesté in Thailand is a known tool to effectively silence critics and political activists by imposing heavy and disproportionate sentences. The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, also expressed his concern over the increasing number of lèse majesté cases after 2014 coup and called on the Thai Government to amend the law to be in compliance with international human rights standard and review all cases prosecuted under lèse majesté.

FORUM-ASIA reiterates its call on the Thai Government to comply with its pledges made during the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2016, when the Thai Government accepted many general recommendations to safeguard the rights to the freedoms of expression and assembly, to protect human rights defenders, and to redress reported cases of harassment and attacks against them. Granting Pai bail would be an important indication of the Thai Government’s commitment to the implementation of the accepted recommendations. Failure to do so, would be indicative of the authorities’ lack of adherence to internationally accepted human rights initiatives.

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.

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