

Appeal to the International Community and national governments to not cooperate with the Chan-ocha Junta in Thailand

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Appeal to the International Community and all national governments to not cooperate with the Chan-ocha Junta and provide Thai people with more affirmative support in their struggle for full democracy

When the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, declared martial law throughout Thailand at 03.00 on 20 May 2014, most Thai knew they were about to experience a full military take-over. Calling themselves the 'National Peace and Order-maintaining Council', on 22 May the Chiefs of all military forces, also of the Police Bureau, declared the 2007 Constitution null-and-void and the Cabinet dissolved. Chan-Ocha declared himself the latest military dictator of Thailand and dispatched military generals to oversee all ministries. Except for pure entertainment, all broadcasting, news and Internet channels were closed-down and orders issued to hundreds of leading politicians and academics to report to the military immediately.

Since becoming Head of State, King Bhumibol has approved 11 military coups - in 1947, 1948, 1951, 1958, 1959, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1991, 2006 / 2008. Every 'Coup for the King' declares that it is executed to protect a King who, above and transcendent of all conflict, represents the spiritual core of Thai nation-state. The current coup is the 12th military coup under Bhumibol, who ascended on 9 June 1946 a few hours after his brother, King Ananda, was found in bed with a bullet through his head. Bhumibol is now the richest monarch in the world.

Fear of popular uprisings ensured that Bhumibol and the Palace stayed close to the military elite. The so-called 'Democrat Party' was formed in the same year Bhumibol became King, from the many descendants of the many concubines of Chakri kings. Since 1946 the Palace has unfailingly supported and facilitated the military juntas and Democrat Party in getting-rid of any group that attempts to take the demands of the electorate more seriously than the demands of the Monarchy establishment.

After World War II fear of communism brought Thai monarcho-militarism in line with US militarism. The Royal Thai Army gave the Pentagon and CIA all support and vice-versa. The bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was mostly conducted from US air bases in Thailand, which employed some 50,000 US military personnel. In the past the US tended to approve military coups in Thailand and still has difficulty to not approve them today.

Prime Minister Pridi Bhanomyong, who led the movement for democracy from 1932, was forced out by the 1947 royalist-military coup, and forced to remain in exile until his death in France in 1983. The only reason why the so-called Democrat Party has become the oldest Political Party in Thailand is because, since 1946, all political parties and governments that won over the Democrat Party at the polls have been destroyed or dissolved. Many Prime Ministers who have attempted to resist the power of the Palace have died mysteriously in Thailand or in exile abroad.

For 200 years the people have watched as 70% of national revenue being channelled to feed the Kingdom of Bangkok. After every successful military coup the budget of the army and Palace, and the wealth of the Crown Property Bureau, has risen significantly.

The military chiefs and elites have always needed the Palace to rubber-stamp their military coups, to ensure that, these days, about 1000 military generals can continue to live off the fat of the land, to guarantee that the wealthiest can continue to accumulate wealth, that the poor will continue to remain poor and silent - as dust under the feet of the King and the jack-boot.

The decade of chaos

Since 1932, throughout the 82 years of the people's struggle for parliamentary democracy, only one elected government has survived the pressure of the royalist elite: the Thaksin Shinawatra government of 2001-2005. Only Thaksin's government was able to survive one full term in office (2001 - 2005) before being ousted by the military in 2006.

Winning every election since 2001, the landslide victories of the people's power camp, alongside Thaksin's popular healthcare policies, shook the ability of the Palace to control government. The royalists managed to forcefully dissolve Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party in 2006 and again his People's Power Party in 2008. Today, even if the Pheu Thai Party, which won a landslide victory in 2011, is unable to oppose the current junta, the people understand that the future of Thailand rests with the electorate - not with the Palace.

The last decade of non-stop political chaos is neither difficult to understand nor as complicated as it sounds. The chaos is quite simply the product of rapidly increasing fear within the old elite, and within Bangkok's new middle-class, that a modern political awareness of equal rights is undermining the supreme power of the monarchical institutions, made more acute by fear that the current Heir-apparent does not have capability to fill the vacuum of supreme power after Bhumibol's departure. More specifically, the greatest driver of oppression is the fear of people's power growing within the high-ranking power-elite that controls the Palace, and all bureaucracies and, most significantly, the wealth and succession of the Crown Property Bureau, the largest, richest and most influential business consortium in Thailand.

Despite all attempts to suppress the democratic aspirations of the people, decades of seeing their elected governments and representatives crushed and humiliated has led the Thai citizenry to understanding that class privilege forms the core of their suffering. For 20 years the Democrat Party has been unable to win a national election and the old power-elite is having to employ their whole arsenal of dirty tricks to prevent their wealth and privileges becoming subject to the policies of a democratically elected popular government. The elite has had to exert all power to eliminate the Yingluck Government. At present only the military elite knows where Yingluck and dozens of other political leaders are being held in detention.

The royalist elite began the most recent round of aggressive mobilization in November 2013. Under direct control of Palace agents, the National Election Commission put huge effort into dis-crediting the February 2014 national election. As a preliminary to the 12th military coup (under this King), in the manner of a child being sent home from school, on 7 May 2014 the 'Constitution Court', that was re-constituted by the Privy Council as a kangaroo court after the 2006 military coup, ordered Yingluck 'out'.

This 2014 coup is a planned operation to regain total control of government at any cost, whatever the damage to the country, to enable royalists to survive the succession of the throne to best advantage. Royalist interest in ensuring that royalist military forces are in charge during the

succession, to ensure that the divine right of the monarch will continue to service the interests of the Court, military chiefs, Crown Property Bureau, royalist elites and new middle-class, is far greater than any concern for the needs and interests of the masses.

Freedom of speech

Since the 1950ies all Thai people, in fact most of the world: diplomats, business and tourists alike, have been silenced, directly or indirectly, by the law of lèse-majesté, by often unrestrained interpretation and use of Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code, which states that “Whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.”

Alongside the various national constitutions upholding the King as Head of State, Article 112 has played a key role in Thailand’s modern history, by making it impossible for people to discuss the relation between the monarchy and the military, in effect, blocking, for seven decades, Thailand’s real abilities to find the road to sustainable development.

How the world can help Thailand

The world knows all about Thailand. The chaos, suffering and political madness in Thailand can only be terminated by breaking through the bluff and veils of all-too-convenient diplomatic silence. Allowing a country like Thailand that has received vast amounts of all kinds of ‘development aid’, that has natural resources and huge potentials in terms of bio-productivity, that caters for millions of tourists, to fall back under military dictatorship and force-of-arms insults the aspirations of the International Community.

The International Community must become much more active in ensuring that the Royal Thai Army, Privy Council and the wealthiest, monarchical establishment in the world cannot pursue their anti-democratic policies.

Respect can only be won by respecting rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom to vote and the right of people to be able to appeal to their own democratically elected assemblies and representatives.

We who work for peace and happiness in Thailand, and throughout the community of the ASEAN, know that the future of our region depends on our ability to contain, prevent and remove possibilities for militarists and royalist to over-rule democratic procedure.

As members of the global community we must support equal rights for people in Thailand as well as for any other population.

We urge the International Community, the ASEAN and all governments to inform the Chan-ocha junta, calling itself a National Peace and Order-maintaining Council, to immediately . .

- order all soldiers back to barracks;
- release all who have been arrested;
- return all power to the elected government, so that it can conduct a national election, as planned for 20 July (2014);
- withdraw completely from interfering in all juridical procedure;

- disband completely the illegal 'National Peace and Order-maintaining Council'.

In solidarity with the struggle for fully democratic government in Thailand.

Signatures:

Action for People's Democracy in Thailand (ACT4DEM)

Malaysia Support Group for Democracy in Thailand

We shall update the signatures when available.
