

ICTS13 Declaration: Return the Space of Knowledge, Rights, and Civil Liberties to Thai Society

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Declaration of the “The Community of International Academics”

13th International Conference on Thai Studies

and Scholars on Thai Studies

“Return the Space of Knowledge, Rights, and Civil Liberties to Thai Society”

Since the coup by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) in 2014, the rights and freedom of the Thai people to access information, news, facts, and knowledge have been greatly suppressed and derogated. A significant number of those who hold opinions different than the state have been harassed, threatened, and arrested and detained in contravention to judicial principles and process. Although this situation has emerged in Thailand, it is not only a matter of concern for those inside the country. This is because Thailand is a member of the international community that accepts the foundational principles of respect for rights and freedom in accessing information, expressing opinions, learning, and basic human dignity, without division by ethnicity, race, sex, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, birthplace, or other factors.

“The Community of International Academics” present at the 13th International Thai Studies Conference, and scholars on Thai studies, whose names are listed below, realize the importance of rights and freedom to express opinions and search for knowledge through exchange and debate upon a foundation of the recognition of difference and diversity of thought, belief, and ideology. Therefore, we view the suppression of freedom of thought in Thai society at present to be of concern because it will result in the deterioration of knowledge as it renders the people unable to access the truth and search for information to move forward. Further, the arbitrary exercise of power by the state to violate the rights and freedom of the people who think differently has caused a decline in human rights in both Thai society and the international community. We therefore make the following demands:

1. The state must respect academic freedom by returning the space of knowledge in which the people can access different kinds of information and facts, as well as allowing the exchange of knowledge without suppression, control or distortion. For example, the facts about the 1932 transformation from absolute to constitutional monarchy in both the past and the present, the facts about social institutions that are connected with political problems in Thailand, etc. These facts constitute important raw material for creating diverse knowledge that will benefit intellectual progress and the development of Thai society and politics as well as the global community.
2. The state must respect rights and freedom in the people’s expression of opinion and other forms of expression by returning freedom to prisoners of conscience who have been arrested and detained simply because they hold different opinions than the state. This includes, for example, prisoners in Article 112 cases and prisoners in cases related to the political demonstrations in 2010.
3. The state must swiftly return the sovereignty to the people in line with democratic principles,

such as through free and fair elections.

4. The state must reform important institutions in Thai society, especially the judiciary and the military, which often exercise power freely without any regard for the people and partly led Thai society and politics to the current crisis.

“The Community of International Academics” and scholars on Thai studies holds that actions in line with these four demands constitute the minimum necessary for Thai society to achieve harmony, reconciliation, and peace. These actions are also the minimum necessary for true reform of Thai society — reform informed by consciousness and the power of knowledge — rather than the raw and crude exercise of power to suppress and dominate the space of knowledge taking place at present.

With faith in learning with freedom

“The Community of International Academics” at the 13th International Conference on Thai Studies and scholars on Thai studies

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Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Center

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