

Thailand: Women's rights group campaigns for abortion rights at Democracy Monument protest

Sunday 16 August 2020, by [PRACHATAI](#) (Date first published: 16 August 2020).

The Women for Freedom and Democracy group has set up a station at today's protest at the Democracy Monument for people to sign their petition calling for the decriminalization of abortion.



The signs at the Women for Freedom and Democracy group's station. The red and yellow sign in front says "repeal Article 301" and "abortion is not a crime."



The group was formed by women's rights and LGBT rights activists and is planning to campaign on abortion rights, LGBT rights, and bodily autonomy. At their station in the protest, people can scan a QR code to sign a petition calling for the repeal of Article 301 in the Thai Criminal Codes, which criminalises abortion.

People can also write down on pieces of clothes their hopes and dreams for gender equality, as well as colour a drawing of a vagina.

Activist Supeecha Baotip said that there are many levels of democracy, from the macro level to people's right to their bodies. Abortion, sexuality, the bias against menstruation, and love are all related to democracy on a personal level.

"There are a lot of people who has a bias against menstruation. People like to think that period makes you irritable, therefore women are irritable, because when she gets to that time of the month, she becomes irrational, which makes women look irrational. This is about our bodies. Democracy is about politics on a wider scale, but the rights of one person together, the rights that were given have

to be accountable,” Supeecha said.

“It’s not possible for you to have a very good democracy, but when you go home, your husband rapes you, or if you’re a transwoman and you can’t come out to your family, but the society is very democratic.”

When asked about the idea that the campaign for democracy should come before the campaign for gender equality, Supeecha said that such ideas will slowly disappear and people will understand. She said that people now know that that is not the case, and that pro-democracy activists themselves are now raising questions about harassment both in the movement itself and out of the movement. For Supeecha, this issue has to be worked on slowly until an answer is reached.



Kornkanok Kamta, another representative from the group, read a statement from the main stage at around 18.55, showing their support for the Free People Group, who organized the protest, as well as calling for the decriminalization of abortion.

“How are we going to be democratic if the state is controlling even our bodies, even our reproductive health?” the statement asked. It also noted that the state health system does provide abortion services, but no one knows or dares to promote it out of fear of the law, and that doctors who perform abortion risk arrest and being condemned by other doctors, while women risk unsafe termination procedures. Many faced the risk of arrest, loss of money, loss of time, and many lost their lives.

The statement said that the group is calling for the decriminalization of abortion in order to make abortion an accessible reproductive health service, so that no woman will have to face the risks of an unsafe abortion.

“We demand for the repeal of a law which punishes women, because this is our bodies, our decision, our responsibility for our own lives. This is the best option we have chosen for ourselves,” said the statement. “The right to safe abortion is a women’s right, is a reproductive right, is a human right. Stop controlling women’s rights and freedom, stop harassing citizens, and dissolve parliament already, if you don’t even know how to spell the words ‘human rights’.”

In February 2020, the Constitutional Court ruled that Article 301 of the Thai Criminal Code which criminalizes abortion, violates the current Constitution and must be amended, after Srisamai Chuechart, obstetrician who was previously arrested in 2018 for providing abortion at a clinic in Hua Hin, filed a request to the Court to rule whether Articles 301 and 305 of the Criminal Code violated the Constitution.

In June 2020, representatives from Choices Network Thailand and the Tamtang Group also submitted a petition to the Standing Committee on Children, Young People, Women, the Elderly, Persons With Disabilities, Ethnic Groups, and LGBT People calling for the repeal of Article 301.

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Petition link: <https://tinyurl.com/y2wusmzc>

P.S.

- Prachatai. Submitted on Sun, 16 Aug 2020 - 09:41 PM:
<https://prachatai.com/english/node/8726>