

Emergency decree: Thai protesters vow to return to streets after Friday clashes

Saturday 17 October 2020, by [Press Agencies](#) (Date first published: 17 October 2020).

'Be prepared both physically and mentally for the demonstration and to cope with a crackdown if it happens,' group Free Youth's online post says.

Thai pro-democracy protesters said Saturday, October 17, they would defy an emergency decree banning gatherings for a third consecutive day after confrontations the previous night saw riot police use water cannons against the mainly young activists.

About 3,000 demonstrators in the city's main shopping mall district demanded the release of arrested protesters, and some shouted obscenities against Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha before they were dispersed by police.

Free Youth, one of the main protest groups, on Saturday morning called on its supporters to return to the streets later that day.

"Be prepared both physically and mentally for the demonstration and to cope with a crackdown if it happens," the group's online post said.

Several hundred riot police dispersed the protesters on Friday by firing blue-dyed water laced with a chemical agent from the cannons.

Police later said the dye would mark protesters for future legal action.

The youth-led movement has jolted the kingdom's political elite with its demands for the government to step down and reforms of the previously unassailable monarchy.

The ultra-wealthy and powerful King Maha Vajiralongkorn has not addressed the civil unrest directly but during a ceremony broadcast Friday reminded people that Thailand "needs people who love the country, people who love the institution of the monarchy".

'Impunity'

Thai Lawyers for Human Rights told AFP that 65 activists had been arrested since Tuesday, including 9 of the most prominent figures of the pro-democracy movement.

Earlier on Friday, two activists were arrested under a rarely used law banning violence against the queen because they were among a group surrounding a royal motorcade on Wednesday during a large demonstration.

Both men could face life in prison if convicted.

A Thai journalist was also briefly detained during Friday's protest, according to his online news outlet, Prachathai.

Premier Prayut has extended the emergency decree banning gatherings of more than 4 people until mid-November, ignoring activists' calls for him to resign.

The former army chief was the mastermind behind a 2014 coup before being voted into power in last year's election which protesters say was rigged in his favor.

Opposition party Pheu Thai has called on the government to lift emergency measures and free those detained.

Human Rights Watch on Saturday warned the emergency decree gave police "the green light to commit rights abuses with impunity" and called for international condemnation.

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

- Rappler.com. Oct 17, 2020 1:49 PM PHT:

<https://rappler.com/world/asia-pacific/thai-protesters-vow-return-to-streets-after-friday-clashe>

Thai protesters clash with police, call out as king's motorcade passes

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Hundreds of Thai protesters scuffled with police and threw blue paint at them on Tuesday and, after 21 of them were arrested, chanted "release our friends!" as the royal motorcade of King Maha Vajiralongkorn swept past.

Among those taken away were Jatupat Boonpattaraksa, a protest leader, and Chaiamorn Kaewwiboonpan, a singer. People who were detained would be charged appropriately, police said.

"The protesters may not have observed the law today so police had to act to bring order and didn't act disproportionately," government spokesperson Anucha Burapachai told Reuters.

Such open dissent towards the monarchy has no recent precedent in Thailand, and came on the eve of the latest planned anti-government demonstrations.

The protests, which have persisted for three months, present the biggest challenge in years to a political establishment dominated by the army and the palace.

Protesters are calling for a new constitution and the removal of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former junta leader.

They have also called for curbs on the powers of the monarchy, breaking a longstanding taboo against criticising the royal family which many people still revere.

The Royal Palace has given no response to requests for comment on the protests or demands for royal reform.

In a sign of the monarch's ongoing popularity among many Thais, the king and queen left the palace late on Tuesday, smiling broadly as they greeted thousands of cheering supporters who waited in the rain on the anniversary of his father's death.

Earlier in the day, hours before the royal motorcade was due to pass Bangkok's Democracy Monument, protesters had pushed up against a police line and some threw blue paint.

Police demolished a tent set up for the protest and dragged some demonstrators into police vehicles.

THREE-FINGERED SALUTE

After the trouble, the royal motorcade passed by on the other side of the street. Protesters raised their hands in the three-fingered salute of anti-government campaigners and demanded the release of those detained.

"This is the ugliness of feudalism, where one person can do anything and the majority of the people have to accept it unconditionally," Parit "Penguin" Chirawat, a student leader, said on Twitter.

The top trending hashtag on the social media platform in Thailand, used more than 1.5 million times, insulted the king.

Insults to the monarchy are punishable by up to 15 years in prison under Thailand's lese majeste laws, but the prime minister said earlier this year that the king requested that they not be used for now.

Protesters have said they do not seek the abolition of the monarchy, but to reduce the king's powers under the constitution and to reverse an order to put the palace fortune and some army units under his control.

"The monarchy has to be under the constitution, that is how it supposed to be," said 21-year-old protester Waranya Siripanya.

In the evening, the demonstrators moved to the police station where the detainees were being held, pressing against the gates to demand their release.

Tuesday was a public holiday to mark four years since the death of the king's widely respected father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who reigned for seven decades.

Vajiralongkorn, who spends much of his time in Germany, made a rare visit to Thailand for the occasion.

Thousands of royalists gathered to pay their respects, bearing the late king's picture and flowers and wearing yellow shirts, the colour associated with him.

Many royalists were critical of the protesters.

"They may have been taught and told that the monarchy doesn't have any value to the nation," said Narongsak Poomsisa-ard, 67. "But I want to remind them that our nation exists until today, because we have the strong institution."

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