

Thailand Sentences 7 to Jail for Protesting Myanmar Coup

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Thai and Myanmar nationals protest against the coup in front of the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok on February 1, 2021. / Prachatai

Seven Thai citizens including a student from Thammasat University have been sentenced to jail, some for more than two years, for taking part in a Bangkok protest against the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021.

The Thai Criminal Court on Monday ruled that the defendants violated the Emergency Decree and interfered with the operations of authorities. All seven were sentenced to jail and fined, according to Thai news outlet Prachatai, citing Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR).

On the day of the coup, Thais and Myanmar nationals protested the military takeover in front of the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok.

The protest was dispersed by Royal Thai Police, who used shields and batons and made arrests.

On Monday, the Criminal Court sentenced Punnaphat Chantanangkul, a Thammasat University student, to 12 months in jail, reduced to four months and 20 days, for his participation in the protest.

A second defendant was sentenced to three years and one month and fined 40,000 baht, reduced to one year, six months and 15 days with a 20,000-baht fine.

The other defendants were each sentenced to four years and fined 60,000 baht. Their sentences were cut to two years and 50 days with fines of 30,000 baht.

The court suspended the sentences of all defendants except Punnaphat, who requested bail.

TLHR later reported that Punnaphat was granted bail after posting 150,000 baht as security.

Despite the Myanmar regime's widespread atrocities and killing of at least 4,000 opponents since the coup, Thailand has maintained good relations with the junta, citing its vulnerability due to the long land border it shares with Myanmar.

Recently, Thailand also hosted an informal ministerial meeting with certain regional countries to pave the way for Myanmar to re-engage with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the leaders' level. The regional bloc has banned the junta from taking part in its summits since late 2021 following its failure to honor ASEAN's peace plan for the country.

Last month, the regime allowed Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai to meet ousted detained civilian leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, making him the first international diplomat to do so.

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