

Thai government refutes HRW report

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Chiang Mai (Mizzima) – Thailand’s Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has defended his government against Human Rights Watch (HRW)’s accusation of Thailand being a threat to principles of human rights in its annual 2010 report.

The premier during his weekly television and radio broadcast on Sunday said his government has always respected human rights principles.

He said the report published by New York-based HRW may have been written before “special mechanisms” were put in place by the government to oversee these issues. “I’m confident regarding protection of human rights (in Thailand), otherwise we wouldn’t apply as a candidate for UN Human Rights Committee, which the Cabinet has already approved,” said a report in the Thai News Agency website on Monday.

“We are concerned about human rights and the migrant worker issue, which is in the process of being re-managed, where national verification will be extended for another two years. However, migrants need to register with the government by end of February,” he said.

Recently, the Thai government announced that the period for Burmese migrants to apply for passports has been extended to two years from the earlier eight months because the number of migrants registering for passports is still extremely poor.

About Hmong refugees, who were repatriated to Lao, drawing strong criticism, he said that there is no report that they are in an unsafe situation. “We insisted that the process follows the bilateral agreement between Thailand and Lao.”

Thai Foreign Affairs Minister Kasit Piromya said he had not yet read the report and added that the reports by Human Rights Watch could be outdated and that the Foreign Ministry would “continue to clarify such charges” in future.

Last week, the HRW released a 612-page report, the organization’s 20th annual review of human rights practices around the globe. It evaluated the situation in Thailand, and said that the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva had largely failed to fulfill its pledges to make human rights a priority.

Brad Adams, Asia Director of Human Rights Watch said while Prime Minister Abhisit had sometimes said the right things about human rights in 2009, his actions didn’t match his words. “The government continually undermined respect for human rights and the due process of law in Thailand.”

Abhisit’s government blatantly flouted Thailand’s obligations under international law to protect refugees and asylum seekers, the group alleged.

P.S.

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