

# **Australia: In solidarity with the democracy protests in Bangkok**

Monday 17 May 2010, by [Thai Red Australia Group for Democracy](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2010).

**On May 16, 2010, an emergency rally in solidarity with the democracy movement in Thailand was held outside the Sydney Town Hall.**

May 16, 2010 — Since March 14, Bangkok has been the scene of mass pro-democracy protests. The protesters known as “Red Shirts” have demanded the resignation of unelected Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and new elections. Abhisit came to power in December through the overthrow of a democratically elected government by right-wing “Yellow Shirt” gangs, assisted by the military and elements of the royal family.

On May 13, the military began a violent assault, with snipers opening fire on unarmed protesters in Bangkok and killing dozens of people and injured hundreds of others. By May 15, it was reported more than 50 people had been killed. The centre of Bangkok was declared a “live fire” zone, with soldiers instructed to shoot to kill on sight. Abhisit aims to cling to power by brutally repressing the mass movement demanding fresh elections.

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We, the Thai Red Australia Group for Democracy, are writing on behalf of Thai people who are victims of the violation of human rights by the present Thai government and the Thai military.

The events in Thailand represent the latest and most severe developments in a wave of violence that has built-up over the past few months. The Thai military-backed government declared a state of emergency amid escalating pro-democracy protests, and killed at least 25 innocent civilians (Red Shirt protesters) on April 10. This was followed by the attacks by the military on April 28, and the murder of unarmed people again on May 13-15.

We, Thai Red Australia Group for Democracy reiterate that since late March the Red Shirts have held peaceful and disciplined protests in Bangkok. They have not destroyed anything or held weapons of any kind. Their demands are for the dissolution of parliament. Any weapons the Red Shirts have taken off the soldiers have never been used and have been safely stored.

The protesters’ demand is clear and simple. They only demand the dissolution of parliament to allow all political parties to seek fresh mandate from the people in the general election. The demand is noble, democratic and is consistent with the democratic values and standards of civilised countries.

The government and military used armed soldiers and violence to disperse a peaceful and constitutional assembly. The use of war weapons to disperse a peaceful demonstration guaranteed by the constitution is clearly illegal, unconstitutional and undemocratic. It constitutes a blatant violation of human rights defined by the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In fulfilling our obligation of human conscience, we feel the crucial need to publicly express our

deepest remorse and concern for this tragedy, which has led to the deaths of at least 27 unarmed Red Shirt protesters so far, almost all of them meeting their horrific death while under the custody of the Thai armed forces.

The government declared the state of emergency under the executive decree that empowers law enforcement officers and the military to disperse peaceful assemblies.

Not only was the way the state of emergency was declared illegal, but also the way in which the power under the law has been exercised. They have been using and interfering with state-owned media and allow private satellite TV allied and sympathetic towards them to broadcast and bombard the public with one-sided and false information.

It is regrettable that at such a sensitive time in Thailand, the Thai government and military have once again decided to resort to violence to crackdown on Red Shirt protesters. Experience has shown that the government and military will try to crush the unarmed Red Shirt protesters by using military weapons to disperse the peaceful demonstration again.

We call upon the Thai government to do its utmost to calm the situation and to create a climate conducive to the advancement of peace negotiations.

Specifically, we call upon Thai government to act responsibly, and to put an immediate halt to all forms of violence against the Red Shirt protesters.

In this letter, we humbly ask for your cooperation and action to resolve the violation of human rights and press freedom prevailing in Thailand at the moment. We beg for your support in taking up the case of the regrettable situation in Thailand.

We trust that you and your organisation would kindly consider our letter and help the Thai people to achieve their demand and halt to all forms of violence.

**By Thai Red Australia Group for Democracy**

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