

Thailand: Forming the Union for People's Democracy (UPD)

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Announcing the founding of the UNION for PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY 2011

The struggle of humankind is to make ourselves able to live in peace and harmony with our surroundings by ensuring that social welfare is available, equally, to each and every person.

In all parts of the planet, endless warfare has taught and is teaching people that democracy is the only system we know that has the possibility to provide each and every human being with equal rights and justice.

In 1932 Thailand's People's Party (Kanaratsadon) succeeded in abolishing absolute monarchy and establishing a People's Assembly to govern the affairs of state, but from the start the Assembly faced non-stop harassment from royalists.

After 15 years and the mysterious death of the moderate King Ananda in 1946, Thailand's monarcho-militarists decided to terminate dialogue with the People's Party. Their 1947 military coup returned many instruments of power to the Monarchy, including the vast wealth of the Crown Property Bureau.

Together with enlightened elements in the military, the People's Party fought back for some years, but by that time the United States of America was wanting Thailand as a military base, and the CIA began to train, recruit, supply and finance the monarch-militarists, establishing eventually the US (Air Force) bases that killed some 2 million people in Indo-China. Many leaders of the People's Party fled into exile, many were assassinated. During the Cold War hundreds of leaders from the student, labour and farmer movements were brutally assassinated, not to mention unknown thousands of citizens.

The people's democracy movement in Thailand was smothered, suffocated and crushed, and thereafter, thrown mercilessly back and forth by an endless string of monarcho-military coups. In the last 65 years, about 20 altogether with 9 approved by King Bhumiphol.

Following the established, monarcho-militarist practice, our current and 18th Constitution was drafted by the 2006 junta to absolve those responsible of the crime of violating the previous Constitution - the hard-won 1997 'People's Constitution'.

Since the King's approval of the 2006 military coup, and the Queen's open support of the monarchists since 2007, the people of Thailand, and people all around the world, have started, finally, to look more critically at the role of the Chakri Monarchy in the governance of Thailand, and at the accountability of the Chakri household to the people.

Engineered by the royalist power-elite under the treacherous banner of 'national security', the mayhem, murder and political chaos of the last few years has raised, into the public arena, many of the issues made taboo by the laws of the state. Many Thai have begun to understand that the laws restricting their freedom of speech, freedom of association and right to bargain for better conditions

and fair wages are false constructs that have nothing to do with good governance.

Most of the policies and programmes we live with today - for education, agriculture, natural resource management, industrial development, housing and welfare - the products of decades of corrupt, centralist governance - must be thoroughly over-hauled, or over-turned.

For the sake of our health and common, economic well-being, we must strengthen and deepen our struggle for democracy: the only way we will be able to ensure all branches of government become transparent and accountable to the people.

66 million people and 3 million migrant workers, representing some 40 ethnic groups and many religions and beliefs, cannot allow themselves to be ruled by a self-centred, elitist bureaucracy.

To be able to move into the future with dignity, Thai people must grasp and embrace the concept of democracy, whole-heartedly, with both hands.

To be able to move into the future with dignity, we must work for a People's Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our agenda will be realised by respecting each other's rights and establishing greater control over the means of production.

To be able to stand true on the global stage, we must increase our self-reliance by rejuvenating and strengthening our domestic economies.

To become a fully democratic country, Thailand must adopt a holistic AGENDA for CHANGE that includes the following:

Freedom of expression, freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.

Thailand must ratify and respect all international declaration, charters and agreements concerning Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining.

All lès majesté (LM) prisoners must be released immediately, all LM charges must be annulled, and all LM laws abolished.

Equal rights for all.

In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every person in Thailand, regardless of nationality, religious belief, skin colour or occupation, shall be respected and treated equally by law.

Justice for all.

The Thai legislature must uphold the principles of human rights in accord with international law. In law and legal practice, no person in Thailand may stand above the law.

The double-standards that are normal, common practice at every level and in every corner of the Thai judicial system must be weeded-out.

Social welfare for all.

From birth, every bona fide resident of Thailand shall have access to all necessary social welfare, including education, healthcare, housing and pensions.

Sound education for all.

From primary school to the highest level, Thailand's corrupted, elitist, paternalistic educational structures must be soundly re-constituted.

The whole meaning of education in Thailand needs to be re-defined. To free ourselves of the royalist dictatorship of curricula, narrow-sightedness and debilitating biases, we need to ensure that a much wider range of people is engaged in determining what and how we learn.

State education is for everybody and does not necessitate obligatory uniforms.

Empowerment of women.

A nation that sells its young women to compensate for the absence of social welfare can only fail. Thailand and the Thai must face understanding that all customs and practices that permit and encourage women to sell their bodies must be eliminated.

For centuries Thai working women have carried as much or more than their share of work for the welfare of the state, but women still have only a 16% representation in Parliament.

The UPD demands equal representation for women at all levels and in all areas of government - immediately.

Food security

The security of the people of Thailand (and of the nation) depends not on the maintenance of a grossly over-sized military, or upon ability to assemble electronic components and automobiles. Security depends, as it has always done, upon the vitality of our villages and the health and diversity of our agriculture.

Respecting, supporting, rejuvenating and protecting the knowledge and skills of rural workers and the structural integrity of our tens of thousands of village communities, and the natural diversity of our landscapes, is a top-priority political objective.

Ecosystem rights

The less diverse our communities the lower our potentials to adapt, the less resistant we are to climate change,

In the same way that all animals and plants are dependent upon their ecosystems, so too are humans, but as the greatest destroyers of the ecosystems upon which all life depends, we humans have little to be proud of.

Protecting the integrity of our ecosystems against human greed and human pollutants, like CO₂, GMOs and nuclear radiation, is a top-priority political objective.

Respect for ethnicity and cultural diversity

Thailand's failure to solve ethnic conflicts has less to do with lack of tolerance between different groups than it does to the insensitive, repressive remedies invented by elite nationalists in the Bangkok bureaucracy.

Thailand's well-known border conflicts are mainly internal conflicts perpetuated to justify the presence of a bloated military.

De-militarisation of Thai society and the channeling of public money from the military to more constructive social purposes is another top-priority political objective.

Unlawful expropriation of the people's land and resources.

Indigenous and otherwise well-established communities have the right, according to international law, to defend themselves against forced globalisation and unlawful expropriation of their natural resources and means of livelihood.

Irrespective of whether or not plans for Free Trade Zones, or housing estates, or power plants or mining or nature conservation projects are decorated by this or that royal stamp, the rights of local communities to self-determination must be respected.

People's democracy and sustainable development.

During this current period of globalisation in which trans-national corporations often wield greater financial clout than many nation states, the attention of national governments is often pre-occupied by dealing with the neo-liberal, corporate lobby, and often neglectful of the fact that the role of civil servants is to serve the people not the corporations.

The legitimacy of governance is determined by the electorate (all people of voting age), but democracy does neither begin or end at the ballot box. Real movement to peace, stability and prosperity requires the engagement and participation of all people in issues and questions of governance - through open dialogue, debate and hearings, and the maintenance of open, public space, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

Sustainable development is dependent upon the active participation of all women and men, and also children, in developing democratic infrastructure through, direct or indirect, active engagement in decision-making in all areas of governance, and upon the exercise of people's rights to veto plans that might damage development of sustainable means of livelihood.

Forming the Union for People's Democracy

The bloody, military crackdown in April and May 2010 shocked most overseas Thai communities. An on-line petition to 'Stop the Bloodshed in Thailand' was initiated immediately, and delivered to Ban Ki Moon in Bangkok. In many countries Thai people began to meet more regularly to educate themselves on the causes and impacts of the growing Thai Crisis. They mobilised financial support for the victims of the latest wave of monarcho-military aggression, and they distributed information about the crackdown to the European Union and to the Government and general public in the countries where they live.

Since 2006 there has been a fearful increase in the use of lèse majesté (LM) laws and the number of LM prisoners in Thai jails. In 2010 there were 500 new convictions. LM prisoners are victims of the political conflict in Thailand, and it must be clearly stated that LM prisoners are political prisoners.

Many Thai and non-Thai are well-aware that the current use of LM laws to suppress Freedom of Speech is one of the main instruments being used to suppress and block the development of people's democracy.

The urgent need to address the suffering and problems caused by LM laws was one of the main reason why, on 6 August 2011, twenty-four (24) pro-democracy Thai activists, from six countries in Europe, met in Brussels and agreed to form the Union for People's Democracy (UPD).

Tasks and objectives of the Union:

1. To campaign for the abolition of lèse majesté laws in Thailand, and the elimination of all obstacles that prevent Thai people from exercising their right to Freedom of Speech.
2. To campaign for the release all LM and political prisoners.
3. To demand that those responsible for the 2010 crackdown and the murder of innocent, civilian protesters be brought to justice.
4. To campaign generally to raise awareness of the manner in which the monarchy and the military interfere and intervene in governmental procedure, and in the people's movement for people's democracy.
5. To place pressure on the Thai Government to eliminate the double-standards that are dominating the Thai judicial system, and to reform the legislature to accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Human Rights and the judicial system to accord with best international standards and practices.
6. To expose and tackle the trafficking of Thai people into menial labour and the sex industry.

The following persons were elected to organise and represent the Union for People's Democracy

President Amnuay Dockweiler

Vice-presidents

Wilailuck Sriharat

Vasana Fromm

Kannika K. Nielsen

Maliwan Martinsen

Penrung Collet

Toon van der Meer-Sudpian

Amina Svenska

Angela Speck

General Secretary

Junya Yimprasert

Treasurers

Kannika K. Nielsen

Buatim Nys

Public Relations:

Wilailuck Sriharat

Kaysorn Nielsen

Education & media:

Phenrung Collet

Vassana Fromm

Chalika Hoover

Advisory group:

Jaran Ditthapichai
Manon Moonsak
Veena Janthong
Kam Chob-ngai

Focal points:

Belgium Chalika Hoover
Denmark Kannika K. Nielsen
Finland Junya Yimprasert
France Wilailuck Sriharat
Germany Vasana Fromm
Netherlands Toon van der Meer-Sudpian
Norway Maliwan Martinsen
Sweden Amina Svenska
Switzerland Angela Speck

MEMBERSHIP

The Union for People's Democracy is open and welcomes all pro-democracy organisations and activists of all colour and creed. Information about membership can be found at . .

www.unionforpeoplesdemocracy.net or email: savethailand gmail.com

The first UPD Congress will take place within the next 12 months.

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Union for People's Democracy announces a Day of Global Action for Democracy in Thailand: 19 September 2011, calling on the new government of Thailand to . .

- abolition Thailand's lèse majesté (LM) laws
- dismiss all LM charges
- free all prisoners charged with LM (more than 500 people)
- take steps to identify and release all political prisoners in Thai jails.

P.S.

* "Thailand. The Union for People's Democracy (2011)". Posted on August 26, 2011 4:33 PM :
http://www.globallabour.info/en/2011/08/the_union_for_peoples_democrac.html