

The Thai State Must Stop its violence in the South

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The recent incident where villagers in Ranga, Naratiwat, captured two marines, who they suspected of causing violent incidents, should serve as a lesson to the Thai government that it is time for a change in policy, rather than being used as an excuse for further state repression and military means. In reality our brothers and sisters in the southern villages are decent peace-loving people. They are driven to carrying out such extreme measures because they are no longer prepared to be on the receiving end of state sponsored violence.

The Thai state has a long history of violence in the south, especially over the last two years. The state has never shown any respect for local cultures and beliefs. Thousands have been “disappeared”, including the respected human rights lawyer Somchai. The government has committed crimes against the people in its war on the local community, both in the Krue-sa and Takbai incidents. Despite the fact that social activists in the peoples movement, human rights defenders and many academics have repeatedly warned the government over its policies, this government has ploughed ahead with its repressive laws and violent means.

The death of anyone, whether it be a marine or a villager is a terrible event. But Thai society must ask itself how this vicious cycle of violence can be stopped. The first step must be a change in policy on the part of the government. Peaceful, democratic and political means must be used to resolve this crisis and the local population in the three provinces must be centrally involved in any decisions. But for this to happen, the Thai State must prove that it is to be trusted in its sincerity to solve the problem peacefully. This means that the government must admit to the recent state crimes that have been committed, rather than blaming villagers or the Malaysians.

On its own this government will never take the road to peace. That is why it is up to all organisations and individuals in the peoples movement to come together and advocate peace and justice. We would like to re-emphasise our position: oppressive laws must be scrapped and the police and army should be withdrawn from the area as part of a peaceful political solution. We wish to affirm our solidarity with the villagers of the south and with all those in the Thai social movements who are working for peace and social justice.

On behalf of Workers’ Democracy Group

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