

URGENT ACTION

THREATS TO THE LIVES OF VILLAGE LEADERS

There are allegations that professional gunmen have been hired to attack and possibly assassinate six men and two women associated with the Khon Rak Ban Koed group in Wangsaphung District, north-eastern Thailand.

Since the allegations of further planned attacks on them have come to light, villagers fear for their safety and have reported ongoing intimidation. On 31 May a group of five to six armed men, whose identity remains unknown, stood amongst rubber trees directly facing the house of a village leader in Nanongbong village. On the evening of 1 June gunshots were heard from behind the same house. On 31 May a black pick-up truck drove around Fakhuy village.

There has been grave concern for the safety of the 700 residents of Nanongbong village in north-eastern Thailand, since it was attacked by at least 100 unidentified armed men on 15 May. Some of the villagers were assaulted and detained for around six hours during the incident. It is believed that the attack is connected to opposition to the planned expansion of a local gold mine. Those detained included the leaders of the People who Conserve Motherland (Khon Rak Ban Koed) group, which monitors the impact of the gold mining project and opposes its planned expansion. The attack follows reports of increasing threats and intimidation against the villagers in Nanongbong, believed to be as a result of their activities opposing the mine.

Please write immediately in Thai, English or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of eight persons associated with the Khon Rak Ban Koed group, believed to be the target of a plan of attack in Wangsaphung District, and other villagers in the area following reports of attacks and threats against them, and demanding that they be provided with effective protection in consultation with them and with due regard to their rights, and their safety guaranteed,
- Urging the authorities to initiate an independent investigation into the attack and threats against villagers and ensure that suspected perpetrators are brought to trial in proceedings that meet international standards for fairness.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JULY 2014 TO:

Leader of National Peace and Order
Council

Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha
Royal Thai Army Headquarters
Rachadamnoen Nok Road,
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Fax: (+66-2) 226 1838
E-mail: prforeign@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear General

Permanent Secretary, Ministry for
Natural Resources and Environment

Ministry of Natural Resources and
Environment
Pollution Control Department Building
92 Phohol Yothin soi 7
Phohol Yothin Road, Phayathai
Bangkok, Thailand, 10400
Fax: +66 2 278 8545
Email: rungtip.t@mnre.mail.go.th

Salutation: Dear Minister

Police Commissioner General

Watcharapol Prasarnrajkit
Royal Thai Police
1st Bldg, 7th Floor Rama I, Patumwan
Bangkok, Thailand, 10330
Fax: +66 2 205 3738

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner
General**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 130/14. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA39/006/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Villagers from Nanongbong village reported that at 10pm on 15 May at least 100 men armed with metal sticks, knives and guns, entered their village in Wangsaphung District, Loei Province. The intruders attacked a checkpoint manned by villagers to stop trucks from leaving and entering the nearby Phutahpfa gold mining site. Around 30 villagers were forced to lie face down with their hands and feet bound for some six hours. During this time the intruders broke down a barrier built by the villagers to block access to the mine, and a convoy of trucks transported materials from the mine. The intruders assaulted and threatened the villagers with guns before leaving at around 4.30am. At this stage the identity of the armed intruders, some of whom were reportedly wearing masks, is unknown. The Superintendent at Wangsaphung Police Station has stated that police will investigate the attack, hold perpetrators to account, and launch a disciplinary probe into the lack of effective police intervention to stop it.

The company operating the gold mine, Tungkum Limited (TKL), a gold exploration and mining majority owned by the Tongkah Harbour Public Company Limited, has filed criminal and civil charges, including a compensation claim for some 270 million Thai Baht (USD 8.3 million), against the villagers. A court ruling and arbitration in the case is expected on 3 June 2014.

Amnesty International has long-standing concerns for the safety of environmental activists in Thailand. Some 16 have been killed since 2002, and activists regularly face threats and intimidation in connection with their activities.

Name: Suraphan Rujichaiwat (f), around 700 villagers from Nanongbong village
Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 130/14 Index: ASA 39/009/2014 Issue Date: 2 June 2014