



The NHRCT will investigate the cases of violence occurred during the demonstrations on 16 and 18 July 2021 and calls upon all parties to respect the principles of human rights and non-violence

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) has closely monitored recent demonstrations with concerns as the violence occurred. On 16 July 2021, the clash during the demonstration questioning the procurement of mRNA vaccines at the Ministry of Public Health resulted in injured protesters and police officers. On 18 July 2021, when the protesters moved to the Government House, police officers used crowd control measures such as water cannon, tear gas and rubber bullets to stop protesters causing many injuries including journalists.

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) has well recognized that Thailand and Bangkok are currently facing the severe pandemic of the COVID-19 and the government has issued the Announcement No. 28 under Section 9 of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration, B.E. 2548 (2005) prohibiting any activities and gatherings of more than five people in the strictest control areas in order to contain the disease. However, when the demonstration took place, the protesters must respect the principle of peaceful, unarmed and non-violent assembly. Law enforcement officials should manage public order with due respect of human rights and should consider safety of protesters and people in the area. In such light, the NHRCT has preliminary views on the situation of demonstrations on 16 and 18 July 2021 as follows:

1. On 16 July 2021, the confrontation caused injuries to both sides. A police officer suffered a head injury from being hit by hard object while he was arresting protest leaders. The NHRCT views that such a violent act should not occur. The exercise of freedom of assembly which is guaranteed and protected by the Constitution shall be peaceful and unarmed. The case will be further investigated by the NHRCT.

2. On 18 July 2021, police officers took various measures to control and disperse demonstration such as water cannon, tear gas and rubber bullets, which caused many injuries including journalists with armbands. The NHRCT also considers that the use of razor wire as barrier is too dangerous and can present risk of harms and life threatening. According to the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on the Use of Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, dangerous equipment should be used when other methods are not available, or in the necessary situation with extreme caution to reduce the risk of harm to protesters. The NHRCT will also investigate the case.

The NHRCT emphasizes the importance of non-violent means by all parties and earnestly hopes that different opinions will be respected. In using peaceful means to resolve problems, human rights principles and the rule of law must also be adhered to. Furthermore, the NHRCT reiterates the importance of the right to health of others and public health when people exercise their rights and freedoms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand

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