



**NHRCT expressing concerns over the rights of prisons inmates and recommending government to expedite COVID-19 vaccination to prisons to prevent and reduce severity of pandemic**

**Mr. Suwat Theparak, Commissioner and Acting Chairperson,** reveals that, at the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of 2021 of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) on May 18, B.E. 2564 [2021], the NHRCT had a great concern over the COVID-19 pandemic situation in prisons which has affected the rights to life and health of inmates. Due to overcrowding condition of prisons and the way of their living in closed areas for a long time, all inmates are prone to contracting the virus. Prisons also lack equipment to prevent the spread of the disease, as well as public health personnel to take care of inmates thoroughly.

Inmates are considered vulnerable as regards their right to medical care that is a basic right to which the general public is also entitled. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have announced human rights guidelines in the situation of COVID-19 outbreak in relation to inmates that States should pay special attention to detained individuals who are at increased risk of the disease upon occurrence of spread and infection while social distancing is difficult to observe. States should take special measures for all to resolve and respond quickly to the crisis. The NHRCT, therefore, suggests that the government, relevant authorities and various sectors consider taking the following actions.

1. The government by the Ministry of Public Health should expedite adequate and thorough supply and vaccination process for inmates. This is to follow screening, isolation and treatment of infected inmates.
2. The Ministry of Justice is encouraged to take 10 proactive measures, which have been announced, to tackle COVID-19 outbreak in prisons, and should consider strict and proactive screening of correctional officers, prison workers and their families.
3. The Department of Corrections should make sure that inmates' relatives understand the restriction on their visits and the disclosure of illness information of infected inmates to their relatives, and allow communication via a video conference system to prevent inmates from COVID-19 contract.

“The NHRCT requests that the society understand public health reasons and needs that warrant the state to expedite the vaccination for herd immunity among inmates, and recognize that inmates have human dignity and basic rights as well. We encourage all sectors of the society to overcome this crisis together”, said Mr. Theparak.

Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand  
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