

Executive Summary

National Human Rights Commission of Thailand

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2024

The Annual Performance Report of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) for the fiscal year 2024 is prepared in accordance with Section 45 of the Organic Act on the National Human Rights Commission B.E. 2560 (2017). The report covers key performance of the NHRCT from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, which are summarized below.

Protection of human rights

The NHRCT received a total of 980 complaints alleging human rights violations. Of these, 685 cases (69.90%) were accepted for action, with 158 cases for coordination of human rights protection, 108 cases for investigation of human rights violation, 45 cases for coordination of assistance, 16 cases for research and policy recommendations on human rights promotion and protection, and 358 cases for other forms of assistance. The top three issues that were most complained about were the rights relating to the administration of justice, community's rights, and the right to file complaints.

The NHRCT completed the investigation of 136 complaints, with 79 cases (58.09%) involving human rights violations. These include (1) a nuclear reactor project in Ongkharak District, Nakhon Nayok Province, which posed significant risks to surrounding communities; (2) the discriminatory treatment of a former prime minister receiving continuous special medical care; and (3) digital platform operators hiring delivery riders without proper labor rights and benefits. In 40 cases (29.41%), no violations were found but recommendations were made to promote human rights. Such cases are, for example, the missing Cesium-137 radioactive material in a Prachinburi Province thermal power plant, the impact of telecom merger on rural and low-income communities, and the denial of education to children in temporary shelters in Umphang District, Tak Province. The NHRCT dismissed 17 cases for reasons such as resolution by relevant authorities, withdrawal of cases by the complainants, or cases being under court litigation.

Policy Recommendations for Systemic Human Rights Protection and Promotion

The NHRCT issued 27 policy recommendations, including (1) amendment of laws on death penalty to align with human rights principles; (2) establishment of regulatory mechanisms to support alternative education; and (3) integration of measures to mitigate damages caused by wild elephants and ensure fair compensation for affected individuals.

Assessment Report of the Human Rights Situation in Thailand

The NHRCT submitted the 2023 annual human rights situation report to the Parliament and the Cabinet on 28 March 2024. The report highlighted key human rights concerns, including the right to justice, freedom of expression, labor rights, the right to education, community's rights, and the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, persons with disabilities, stateless persons, ethnic groups, and the urban poor. It also addressed human rights issues in Thailand's southern border provinces.

Follow-up of NHRCT recommendations

In fiscal year 2024, the NHRCT monitored the implementation of its recommendations, which led to the closure of 54 cases and responses from relevant agencies in 53 cases. Notably is the recognition by the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand that HIV infection should not be classified as a disqualifying condition for Buddhist ordination. Additionally, the NHRCT's recommendations have influenced government policy changes, such as the Cabinet's approval of the amended civil service regulations that do not impose an across-the-board prohibition of individuals with psychosis or severe mood disorders from public service employment.

The NHRCT also provided 55 recommendations in its 2023 human rights situation assessment report, which saw significant progress in their implementation. One such example is the Senate's approval of the draft amendment to the Civil and Commercial Code, also known as the Marriage Equality Act, which was later published in the Royal Gazette and became effective on 22 January 2025.

Promoting human rights awareness across all sectors of society

The NHRCT promoted human rights awareness through E-Learning courses, multimedia communication, and monthly e-newsletters. It issued official statements on critical human rights issues and organized public awareness campaigns, such as the Pride Month and Indigenous Peoples' Day. Academic fora such as "Holistic Perspective on the Land Bridge Project" were organized while collaboration with government agencies, civil society networks and the private sector was promoted to drive forward human rights, including the development of business and human rights curricula, and the signing of an agreement to promote corporate human rights compliance, particularly in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). In addition, the NHRCT encouraged various entities to adopt human rights good practices to foster a culture of respect for human rights within their organizations.

Research and Studies

The NHRCT conducted two major research projects in 2024, namely the development of tools and standards in compliance with the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act B.E. 2565 (2022), and the framework development for human rights impact assessment (HRIA). The former research study has been completed while the latter is currently in progress.

International Cooperation

The NHRCT was chair of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) and hosted the 20th SEANF Annual Meeting with the theme “Celebrating 30 Years of the Paris Principles and 75 Years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” The NHRCT has also participated in international conferences organized by the United Nations, global and regional networks of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organizations. These conferences focused on issues such as torture prevention torture, environmental rights, and business and human rights. Moreover, the NHRCT has been cooperating with UN mechanisms to monitor Thailand’s compliance with international human rights obligations.

Organizational Development

The NHRCT restructured its office by establishing a new unit for monitoring detention facilities and preventing torture. It has also prepared for the establishment of a regional office in northern Thailand to enhance public accessibility and collaboration with local stakeholders. Furthermore, the efforts were made to strengthen staff competencies through targeted training programs and digital transformation initiatives.

Challenges and Recommendations

Firstly, the NHRCT’s mandate to promptly clarify incorrect or unfair human rights reports about Thailand may conflict with its independence under the Paris Principles, potentially undermining public trust. **Secondly**, NHRCT lacks legal authority to mediate human rights disputes, which could be a valuable mechanism for effectively resolving human rights violations. The NHRCT has reaffirmed its intent to amend the Organic Act on the National Human Rights Commission to address these challenges, and submitted the proposed amendments to the Prime Minister for Cabinet consideration. However, due to a change in the Cabinet, the matter was returned to NHRCT for confirmation, leading to a formal re-submission on 21 October 2024. **Lastly**, some state agencies have failed to implement NHRCT’s recommendations while others did put them into practice but with some delay. The Cabinet should ensure that relevant agencies act on NHRCT’s proposals and report progress to improve human rights protection outcomes.