

Joint Statement
Ad hoc Network to Civilian Protection and Freedom of Expression

STOP INTIMIDATING AND SILENCING PEOPLE
OPEN UP POLITICAL SPACE, GIVE PEACE A CHANCE!

2 March 2018

The number of violent incidences in the past couple years might have made the government and security agencies feel complacent about situations in the Southern Border Provinces or Patani. But we, in the name of the Ad hoc Network to Civilian Protection and Freedom of Expression and the signatories of this statement would like to reiterate that such impression is contrast to the reality. As long as the Thai government and the Patani liberation movements have not made an effort to address the issues at their root causes including political solution, and as long as injustices have not been addressed and continue to exist, conflicts in the area will be perpetuated and will not cease. This will leave civilians regardless of their ethnicities and religions to continue to live in such abysmal agonies and to face the harrowing consequences.

Such reiteration can be attested to by what has happened in the past few months, at least since the end of 2017. Apart from suffering incessantly from violent insurgencies, civilians have been affected by search and cordon operations led by security officers who have regularly conducted the search and made the arrest of a large number of people in various areas. The operations have been carried out invoking special laws and as a result, people have been living with fear and are constantly concerned about their safety. It is also prospective that a new wave of violence is in the making.

Such gloomy atmosphere has done disservice to an attempt to push forward peace process by the Thai government. It has exacerbated the conditions of the talk. Meanwhile, attempts have been made by the authorities to intimidate and stifle the right to freedom of expression which has been yearned for by the people. For example, the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Region 4 Forward has reported cases, civil and criminal, against journalists and human rights defenders early February 2018. The Manager Online is to be taken to court simply for reporting allegations about torture in custody whereas the founder of the Patani Human Rights Organization Network (HAP), Mr. Ismael Teh, is also facing a legal action simply for appearing in a Thai PBS's "Policy by People" program to explain about his own legal case to seek remedies from his being tortured while in custody.

The enforcement of both special laws, i.e. Martial Law B.E. 2457 and Emergency Decree B.E. 2548, and criminal laws thus far has grossly failed to serve the intent of the laws which are supposed to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. Instead, this has led to an increase of infringement on personal rights and freedoms and freedom of expression, which are protected by international norms including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), among others. Both international laws provide that an individual shall have the right to their body and freedom of expression. In addition, the enforcement of the laws has failed to prevent misuse of the laws including SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participations).

Public participation to resolve conflicts in the Southern Border Provinces or Patani shall become meaningless, if the government and local security agencies are not aware of the importance to protect right to life of local civilians and their right to freedom of expression, both of which are

instrumental to forging peace based on mutual respect, collaboration and tolerance. We have the following demands to make;

1. ISOC Region 4 Forward and concerned security agencies must refrain from intimidating the people regardless of their ethnicities and religions, and special laws have to be enforced fairly and justly.

2. Patani Liberation Movements or People With Different Views From The State (PDVS) are urged to strictly refrain from intimidating and perpetuating violence against civilians regardless of their ethnicities and religions.

3. ISOC Region 4 Forward must stop all forms of intimidation, particularly by reporting cases against mass media and HRDs, the act of which is tantamount to SLAPPs.

4. The Thai government should review and have all human rights violations in the Southern Border Provinces investigated transparently and proceed to ensure proper and fair remedies and compensation to the victims.

5. All "Peace Partnerships", the Thai government, all Patani Liberation Movements, civil society organizations within or outside the area and international organizations, should keep a close watch and carefully review such intimidating acts as well as offer recommendations to the Thai government and the Patani liberation movements to ensure peaceful cessation of the conflicts.

6. All local civil society organizations, our companions, regardless of their ethnicities and religions must stand united to prevent and preempt any group from perpetuating human rights violation and stifling freedom of expression based on the notion that peace shall not prevail without justice.

With peace and companionship

Ad hoc Network to Civilian Protection and Freedom of Expression

2 March 2018

Organizational signatories

1. Sauguna Group
2. Duay Jai Group
3. Public Health Officers for Social Welfare (PHOS)
4. Bunga Raya Group Patani (BRG)
5. Buddhist Women for Society
6. Selatan Nature
7. NGO Coordinating Committee on Development – South (NGO-COD-South)
8. Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW)
9. PATANI Viewers
10. Buddhists Network for Peace (B4P)
11. Deep South Network for Natural Resource
12. Thai Academic Network for Civil Rights (TANC)
13. INSouth Patani
14. People's Network of Southern Border Provinces for the Protection of Community and the Environment for Peace (PermaTamas)
15. Justice for Peace (JOP)

16. Southern Paralegal Advocacy Network (SPAN)
17. Women's Network to End Violence and Promote Peace in the Deep South
18. Youth Network of Saiburi River Basin (JALEM)
19. Arts and Cultures Conservation Club (PICSEB)
20. Patani Forum
21. Nusantara Foundation for Human Rights and Development (Nusantara)
22. Cross Cultural Foundation (CrCF)
23. Southern Islamic Culture Foundation
24. Muslim Attorney Centre (MAC)
25. Youth Integration for Community Empowerment Center (YICE)
26. Deep South Watch (DSW)
27. Patani-Melayu Cultural Centre (BUMI)
28. Islamic Culture for Development (PUKIS)
29. Media Selatan
30. Fah Sai Association for the Promotion of Children's and Youth's Health in the Deep South
31. Saiburi River Basin Association
32. Federation of Patani Students and Youth (PerMAS)
33. Academy of Patani Raya for Peace and Development (LEMPAR)
34. Awan Book
35. Wartani
36. Buku Bookshop's Gender and Human Rights Class
37. Patani Human Rights Organization Network (HAP)
38. Patani Women's Organization (PERWANI)

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