

INTERNAL (for AI information only)

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To: All groups working on Thai cases
Thailand coordination groups
c.c. relevant national sections

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THAILAND

FURTHER NEWS ABOUT THE TRIAL OF THE "BANGKOK 18"

In the circular of 20 October, I mentioned that the venue of the trial was said to have changed. The trial is now taking place in the Army Quartermaster Department in Pakkret, Nonthaburi Province. The latest hearing of the trial took place on 17 November having been postponed from the previous date set for the hearings, 17 October. It is thought that the court room was moved to Pakkret, a town not far north of Bangkok, in order to try to dispel the intense public interest that was shown at the early hearings in Bangkok itself. A report in the Guardian of 18 November suggests that the public interest in the trial has not been suppressed:

"Diplomats from six foreign countries, including the US, Israel and West Germany, were among 300 people who attended the opening trial of 18 university students charged with treason yesterday. Another 3,000 cheered and waved flowers and flags under canvas marquees on the ground outside an army depot where the military tribunal was being held. A three-man military court conducted the proceedings. The 18 were arrested after fighting at Bangkok's Thammasat University last October when at least 42 people were killed - UPT"

Further details about the preparations for the proceedings appeared in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 14 November:

"Security arrangements for "6th October" trial (Text) A meeting of military officers, policemen and civilians was held on 10 November at the Ministry of Interior to map out security measures to be imposed during the trials of the 6th October 1976 cases, which are scheduled for 17 and 24 November. The trials are set to take place openly at a temporary courthouse in the compound of the quartermaster department, Pakkret, Nonthaburi Province. Since the courtroom can accommodate only 350 persons, a public address system will be installed to enable about 5000 people or more outside the courtroom to follow the hearing. This information has come from the Deputy Under-Secretary of State for the Interior, Mr Channong Thephatsadin Na-Ayutthaya. According to the Deputy Under-Secretary of State, each person who wants to listen to the court trial will have his identity card checked first before obtaining a special pass to enter the courtroom. None of them will be allowed to talk with the defendants, he said. Finally, he added that during the hearing strict security measures will be imposed - no tape recording, photo taking or filming will be allowed, he said. (Bangkok home service in English 0001 gnt 12 November 1977)"

Recommended Actions

1. The groups should still follow the recommended actions outlined in the last circular of 20 October. In addition those groups whose prisoners are on trial (see list below) should write to the court judges at Pakkret asking for further details about the charges against the prisoners and urging that the trial proceed quickly and that the defendants be permitted legal counsel in the court. Since we are not certain that the same military judges will be conducting the trial at Pakkret as had been in Bangkok we suggest that groups address their letters in the following way:

Military Judge
Headquarters of the Quartermaster Department
Pakkret
Nonthaburi Province
Thailand

List of the defendants and the AI groups who are investigating their cases:

Anupongse Pongsuwan	Netherlands 121
Apinan Buahapakdec	Sweden 50
Arorn Pongpangan	Netherlands 241
Arthakarn Oopathapakul	Norway 29
Kongsak Arsaphak	USA 108
Mahin Thanboonpern	Germany 60
Orisa Iyarawonyawuthra	Denmark 8
Praphon Wangsiriphithak	G.B. 73
Prayong Akkarabovorn	Germany 50
Miss Sanglun Jam-duang	G.B. 132
Seree Sirinupongse	Denmark 42
Somsak Iantherasakul	Sweden 208
Suchart Phatcharasoravuth	Canada 12
Suchira Tanchainanth	Germany 180
Surachart Banrungsul	Denmark 15
Suthan Saengprathum	G.B. 62
Thongchai Winitchakul	Germany 587
Viroj Tungwanich	USA 37

We suggest that groups within a certain country try to coordinate their activities on behalf of the prisoners on trial adopted in that country (for example G.B. 132, 73 and 62) and that if possible one of the above 18 groups offers to act as a coordinator for all the groups working on these cases. If any group feels they can undertake the task of coordinating the work of all 18 groups, please would they let me know within the next few weeks. The job would entail distributing information about the trial, suggesting further initiatives that might be undertaken by the groups and so on.

For your information : Apart from the 18 investigation cases above, AI has taken up the cases of 12 other Thai detainees.