

CHAPTER 1

OUTLINE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THAILAND: 1992 - 1999

1992 - 1994

General overview

Popular resistance to the military hardened throughout 1991 and early 1992, and was brought to focus when General Suchinda assumed the position of unelected Prime Minister in April, 1992.

Human Rights Watch Thailand reports that by early May, 1992, thousands of protesters were marching in Bangkok, demanding the ouster of General Suchinda Kraprayoon. General Suchinda had declared himself Prime Minister, despite repeated promises to the contrary. On May 17, after talks between the government and opposition parties concerning Constitutional amendments broke down, the opposition called a new rally. This time, Thai security forces responded with force and opened fire on the demonstrators. The brutal crackdown resulted in at least 52 deaths, hundreds of injuries and a still unknown number of disappearances (with figures ranging from 69 to 200).

Security forces reportedly made no attempt to employ non-lethal methods of crowd control. In addition to summary executions, human rights violations included the unnecessary and disproportionate use of deadly force, violations

of medical neutrality and what may have constituted the removal of bodies without proper inquests or autopsy procedures.

The bloody confrontations on the streets of central Bangkok in Mid-May shocked the world and are said to have dismayed many Thais who had thought that Thailand's rapid social and economic modernization had ensured the nation's political system had developed beyond such interventions.

Peter Jackson of the National Thai Studies Center in Canberra said that, in particular, it was asked how the killings could have happened when, for almost half a decade, many informed Thais had predicted there would be no more coups in Thailand and had proudly referred to their country as one of the most open societies in Asia.

After almost 3 years in power, Chuan had to dissolve the elected House to pave the way for a general election due to the withdrawal of the Palangdham Party. From December, 1994, the government had faced devastating criticism over alleged irregularities in the handling of a land reform program by giving a piece of land back to the former owners in Phuket. The mass media and general public were not convinced. As a result, the party withdrew from the government on the eve of a no-confidence vote. The Chat Thai won, forming a coalition government. Thus elections were successfully used to resolve a government crisis for the first time.

Furthermore, according to Dr. Bunbongkarn, despite the fragility of the democratic government led by Chuan Leekpai, the economy grew at 8.2% for 1992 - 1995.

1995

General overview

In May, 1995, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai dissolved Parliament. The July elections ushered in a coalition administration headed by Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa. For the first time in Thailand's history, there was a peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another, demonstrating that democratic processes were gaining strength and the military's role in politics remained on a significant decline subsequent to the 1992 elections.

While Thailand continued to suffer from a large and growing disparity in income distribution amid the ongoing 7th economic and social development plan, police brutality remained a problem with credible reports of police having beaten and/or coerced suspects.

The government dropped charges against all but one of the current and former senior police officials accused of complicity in 1994 deaths of the wife and child of a key witness in a 6-year-old case involving the theft of gems from a Saudi Prince.

The US Department of State's Thailand Human Rights Practices report for 1995 points out that enforcement of a broad range of laws and regulations by police continues to be noticeably lax.

The report also pointed out that legal and societal discrimination against women, children and ethnic minorities remained a problem in 1995 and that measures aimed at addressing such problems were making only slow progress.

Meanwhile, one political killing was reported in July of 1995; that of Prawain Boonnak. It is believed that he was targeted because of his environmental activism.

The Police Information's Center's statistics for 1994 listed a total of 22 extra judicial killings, with an additional 24 suspects killed while under arrest.

The Legal Information Center reported a total of 359 deaths while in police or Department of Corrections custody in 1994. Complete statistics for the number of suspects killed by police in 1995 were not available.

Although there were no reports of politically-motivated disappearances, the whereabouts of environmental activist, Suchada Khamfubutra, who went missing in December of 1994, remained unknown.

Investigations continued into the whereabouts of the remaining 39 pro democracy protesters listed as missing following the suppression of the pro democracy demonstrations in 1992.

In the prison system, solitary confinement and heavy leg irons were still reportedly used to punish difficult prisoners and medical care in prisons was still reportedly inadequate. While the law requires that prosecutors formally charge suspects within 91 days detention, it is reported that some Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Center detainees had been held for several years.

According to the US State Department's 1996 report, as of July, 1995, there were 109,146 prison inmates in Thailand. Just under 10% were appealing their sentences, while just over 10% were pretrial detainees.

The widely publicized lese majeste trial against prominent social critic Sulak Siwarak, that began in 1993 after his return from self-exile, was concluded in June with his acquittal on all counts.

The Thai Lawyers' Association estimated at least four political prisoners incarcerated in Thailand at this time.

With regard to freedom of speech and the press, radio stations were required by law to broadcast government-produced newscasts four times daily. A bill to abolish this order was passed in October of 1994, but was not made into

law because of the dissolution of the Chuan Government. On November 22, the Prime Minister reportedly requested that the Ministry of Defense intervene to assure that army-owned radio stations do not air broadcasts critical to the prevailing government.

The government routinely edited or "blacked out" portions of programming deemed politically sensitive (or pornographic).

Regarding freedom of religion, members of minority religious movements were sometimes subjected to legal action such as the trial of dissident Buddhist leader, Phra Potirak and his followers.

As for freedom of movement, travel was restricted in certain border areas where foreign or vestigial domestic insurgent groups remained active.

Meanwhile, several regulations intended to help reduce the trafficking in women and children for purposes of prostitution were also apparently used to infringe on their rights to travel freely. Female passport applicants under the age of 36 had to undergo a number of interviews regarding their employment records and finances.

There were several violent border incidents reported in the press in 1995.

In March, a truck transporting food supplies to Karen refugees was attacked by unknown assailants, killing the driver. In May, three Thai border police were killed, prompting the Thai army to intervene militarily, striking several Karen Buddhist Army positions.

As for issue of discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, language or social status, considerable increase was seen in the number of female Members of Parliament (24), the largest to that time, but still small out of the elected total of 391.

There was also occasion government criticism of human rights organizations as being politically motivated and/or biased mentioned in the press.

Regarding women's and children's issues, it was estimated that 50% of women in slum areas were victims of domestic abuse. NGO's estimated some 250,000 involved in prostitution, much greater than the government estimate of 100,000. Although prostitutes were considered criminals under the Penal Code, the brothel owners, procurers, and clients were not subject to criminal statutes. Meanwhile the government announced that its 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan would be particularly concerned with the role of women in Thailand's developing economy. Regarding children's issues, the government approved draft legislation in 1995 that would revise the Criminal Code to toughen laws regarding the abuse of children under the age of 18, with particularly severe penalties for violations perpetrated against children under age 15, but the US State Department report stated that rules of evidence made prosecution of spousal and/or child abuse very difficult. Incidentally, in August, the Ministry of Public Health reported 10,000 HIV-infected infants.

Progress in integrating ethnic minorities into Thai society reportedly remained slow with less than half of the estimated 500 to 800-thousand possessing documentation listing them as eligible citizens. Such non-citizens were barred from participation in the political process.

No significant changes were reported in the general labor environment, although there were several protests voiced against a number of sections within the new Labor Protection Law.

In the years leading up to 1995, the International Labor Organization had cited Thailand for violations of Convention 29 on forced labor and again, in 1995, Thailand was deemed a country for "observation". The government made moves to address child labor issues including increasing the number of inspectors and extending compulsory education from 6 to 9 years.

It was pointed out that unskilled migrant workers and illegal aliens were often employed for less than minimum wages. Enforcement of standards such as these remained weak in 1995 (US Department of State, 1996).

1996

General overview

The coalition government of Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa, elected in July, 1995, was dissolved in the wake of a non-confidence vote in September. November 17 General Elections were narrowly won by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's New Aspiration Party and a coalition government was formed with 5 other parties.

Government efforts to close the economic gap between urban and rural areas remained ineffective. Government land appropriation and unresolved grievances by farmers, workers and slum dwellers led to a demonstration in April by more than 10-thousand protesters, mostly rural dwellers, who set up a "Village of the Poor" in Bangkok.

The US Department of State report on Human Rights Practices in Thailand for 1996 states that some police officers committed extra judicial killings and the incidence of political and extra judicial killings increased in 1996. Police were also accused of torturing and beating suspects.

By the year's end, the government still had not established institutions - government ombudsmen and an independent election commission, even though almost 2 years had passed since their formal Constitutional adoption. There were 2 reported political killings in 1996: in January, Thong-in Kaew-Wattha, a leader of protests against a toxic waster treatment plant; and, in July, Joon Bhoonkhuntod, a farmer activist in Chaiyaphum. He was shot and killed by a police private for "resisting arrest" and was accused of cultivating marijuana.

The Police Information Center reported a total of 23 suspects killed during attempted arrests in 1995, with 16 such killings in the first half of 1996. In November, the news media documented the arrest of six suspects who were

led away in handcuffs in Suphan Buri. They were found dead minutes later. Police claim they acted in self defense.

According to data from the Attorney General's office released in September, 21 cases of killings by officials (including police and other agency officials) were dismissed by the courts in the first half of 1996.

205 suspects and detainees died while in "custody of government officials" in the first 9 months of 1996, according to the same office. Of these, 63 were reported as apparent suicides. Specific case reports from regional authorities indicated that the figure may be as high as 140 deaths in custody. Political activists claimed that the October killing of conservationist Winai Chantamano in Satun Province resulted from his opposition to encroachment on national forest lands. Not a single police officer was convicted in 1996 for criminal actions taken while making an arrest.

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances in 1996 but no developments in the 1994 disappearance of environmental activist Suchada Khamfubutra or the 1991 disappearance of Labor Congress of Thailand President Thanong Po-an.

There were also no developments in investigations into the whereabouts of the remaining 39 pro democracy protesters listed as missing following the military's suppression of demonstrations in May, 1992. A civil case brought by family members remained unresolved.

Access to prisoners was not restricted but medical care in prisons reportedly remained inadequate with only 12 full time doctors and 2 dentists caring for a prison population in excess of 100-thousand.

In June, 1996, a royal pardon resulted in the release and repatriation of some 1,300 Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Center detainees.

As of October, there were 103,202 prison inmates in Thailand. Of these, 9,500 were appealing their sentences and about 25,000 were pretrial detainees. A royal pardon in June resulted in the release of approximately 24,000 prisoners.

In March, two Amnesty International representatives were detained at Bangkok's Bang Rak Police Station for inspection of their passports and travel documents. Their detainment was referred to as an "invitation" to the police station by police, but activists claimed that the detainment coincided with the planned public release of a report highly critical of the human rights situation in China.

A group of 12 Burmese student political activists of concern to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees remained in the Special Detention Center.

Apart from 9 Muslim activists, there were reportedly no political prisoners by the year's end. The remaining prisoners who were serving sentences under the Anti-Communist Activities Act were released under the general pardon granted by the King in June. Some had been imprisoned since 1990. Royal Thai Police Special Branch issued 22 warnings to publication in 1996 (compared to 13 such warnings in 1995) for various violations including "offending public morals" and "interfering with public safety". The offenders were fined but also faced the possibility of prison terms.

In August, the government used unusually strong measures to rebut a university professor's academic paper on alleged bribe taking in connection with illegal gambling, forcing the researcher and the researcher's family into hiding. A police-filed defamation suit was only withdrawn after alterations to the paper were brokered.

With regard to freedom of movement, a new regulation in September allowed illegal alien workers to register for work in 43 of the 76 provinces.

They were allowed to work for up to 2 years while awaiting formal deportation.

More than 100-thousand ethnic minority Burmese and almost 2,000 Burmese students and dissidents continued to reside in some 34 camps along the Burma border.

The widespread practice of vote buying was again said to be present during the 1996 parliamentary by-elections and general elections - free but fraudulent, according to the US State Department's report for 1996. An Election Commission, called for in constitutional amendments of February, 1995, had still not eventuated.

Before and during the 25-nation Asia-Europe Meeting in February, the Government imposed entry ban visas on some political activists and NGO leaders whom the government thought may stage protests.

In August, the government endorsed a plan against commercial sex services, calling for such measures as further education, more vocational education, more professional training and an enhanced public information campaign. A new law passed in September criminalized the trafficking of women and children for the purposes of prostitution and/or slave labor.

"Human development" was a major theme of the 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan released midyear.

In August, the Banharn Cabinet approved legislation that would revise the Criminal Code and toughen penalties against those who abuse children.

Few steps were said to have been taken by the government to implement provisions in the Disabled Rehabilitation Law.

Little progress was said to have been made in integrating ethnic minorities into society. Undocumented hill tribe people cannot own land and do not fall under labor laws for several things including minimum wage requirements.

A sweat shop was raided in July where the owner allegedly used a hot iron on three female workers as punishment for falling asleep on the job.

A tripartite wage committee comprising the government, employers and worker representatives increased the daily legal minimum wage by 7.6% in September. The minimum wage ranged between 128 and 157 baht a day, depending on the cost of living in the respective provinces (US Department of State, 1997)

1997

General overview

A new Constitution was adopted in October. Following the resignation of Prime Minister Chavalit, a coalition government led by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's Democrat Party was formed in November.

Serious economic decline during the year reduced the national income sharply while dissatisfaction with land rights and tenure was the theme of large gatherings organized by the "Assembly of the Poor" in Bangkok.

The US State Department's report on Human Rights Practices for 1997 claimed that the Chavalit Government occasionally tried to discourage free speech, particularly regarding the state of the economy.

There were no reports of political killings, but amid increasing drug trafficking problems, some police units allegedly continued to use excessive force against groups during attempted arrests. At least 35 people were killed during arrests in the first half of the year, the majority of whom were suspected drugs traffickers.

In January, a handcuffed robbery suspect was found sitting, strangled in his cell. He is supposed to have committed suicide.

There were no reported developments in the 1996 killings of environmental protester, Thong-in Kaew-Wattha, or farming activist, Joon Bhoonkhuntod, and no progress reported in the unsolved 1995 murder of conservation activist, Winai Chantamanao.

There were no reported politically motivated killings.

One prodemocracy protester listed as missing from the May, 1992, crackdown was located alive. There were no developments in the 1994 disappearance of Suchada Khamfubutra, nor in the 1991 disappearance of Labor Congress of Thailand President, Thanong Po-an.

Medical care in prisons remained inadequate with 10 full time and 11 part time doctors, as well as 4 dentists, caring for a total prison population of 112,000.

In April, four Lao women being held in Rayong District Police Station were raped by male inmates over a 4-day period, although inmates are supposed to be separated by gender. As punishment, 3 police officers were transferred to inactive posts and 3 higher ranked officers faced an investigation.

Overcrowding and shortages of food and water were reportedly serious at Bangkok Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Center with the population nearly doubling to 2,600 due to an influx of undocumented workers. The government allocated funds for an additional 6 facilities.

As of October, there were 125,069 inmates, almost 10% of whom were accused of drug-related violations. 21% were pretrial detainees. 4 of 12 Burmese detainees were released. None of the 8 remaining had a scheduled trial date.

There are no reported political prisoners aside from one Muslim, Sorayut Sakunnasantisat, who was serving 12 years for leading a 1990 political protest in Pattani. (He was convicted of crimes against the monarchy and for threatening national security.)

In February, a police task force searched houses in Klong Toey without warrants, although these are required by law. The action was regarded as a violation of civil rights.

In July, police entered two foreign-operated brokerages and searched for evidence that the firms had distributed faxes containing inaccurate financial information. The police had a search warrant alleging that these fax messages could undermine government stability. The incident received strong press and public criticism and was generally interpreted as an

unjustified effort to intimidate those who reported unflattering economic views.

In August, a bomb was detonated outside of the home of a newspaper executive known for his highly critical views of the Government. It was widely interpreted as attempted intimidation of the executive to force him to moderate his political commentaries.

In June, a "Media Monitoring Center" was set up by the Government - and was disbanded after just 5 months, having had little impact on journalistic practices. Almost in response, journalists joined together to form a Thai Press Council to set their own specific ethical guidelines, and so forth.

58 warnings were issued against various publications for various deemed violations under the Printing and Advertisement Act of 1941, compared with 22 in 1996.

In March, the Cabinet approved a resolution abolishing a regulation banning publication of possession of Communist-oriented printing matter, but the resolution awaited parliamentary approval.

Religious minorities objected to attempts by some members of the constitution drafting committee to declare Buddhism the official state religion, and such a provision was included in the Constitution draft.

In January, Thai security forces were unable to protect Burmese in 3 camps in Tak Province from intruding Burmese forces. There were also incidents in February, May and November in which security personnel forced some 2,000 asylum seekers back in Burma. There were also reports that civilian authorities regularly returned Shan asylum seekers as Thai immigration authorities do not recognize displaced person status for them.

There were increasing reports of trafficking of girls between ages 12 and 18 from China and Burma to work in the commercial sex trade. This problem

was highlighted in October with the discovery of 10 underage girls in a "short time" hotel in Bangkok. An NGO alleged that they knew they were coming to work as prostitutes and that their travel to Bangkok was facilitated by border police and immigration.

The Government's Social Welfare Plan for Underprivileged People doubled the budget for children's programs for 1997 - 2001, in comparison with the previous 5-year plan.

In 1996, the Government has enacted a stronger law against trafficking in, patronizing or profiting from child prostitutes, but as of early 1997, police were unable to confirm that anyone had been arrested for violations of that law.

A bill which failed to become law during the 1995-96 Banharn Government, was resubmitted to Parliament by the Chavalit Government in December, 1996. It passed the Lower House but was amended by the Senate in August. It contained elements diminishing labor rights and had been previously criticized by the ILO. By the end of 1997, it remained under discussion. Even in the year 1997, the Government did not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children and such practices allegedly still occur even though the Constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor except in national emergencies, war or martial law.

Despite stronger anti-prostitution legislation passed in 1996, raising the penalties for all involved, as of 1997, the US State Department reports that the Government continued to fail to enforce the law.

For several years, the ILO had cited Thailand for violations of Convention 29 on forced labor but as the Government cooperated in establishing institutional links with the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor and other organizations to address the problem, Thailand has not been

made the subject of a special paragraph. Still, enforcement of child labor laws do not appear to be rigorous and authorities seem to respond to only specific public complaints or exposures in the press (US Department of State, 1998).

1998

General overview

A coalition government, led by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's Democrat Party, was formed in November, 1997, following the resignation of Prime Minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh. A severe financial crisis led to the devaluation of the currency in July, 1997. Economic growth was negative for the year and annual per capita income fell from \$3,000 in 1996, by approximately one third. The economic downturn led to widespread urban unemployment. Again, government efforts to close the gap between urban and rural living standards were largely ineffective and groups of farmers held occasional large-scale demonstrations in Bangkok.

The new Constitution provided for the establishment of a permanent National Commission on Human Rights, but it is reported that enforcement of a broad range of laws and regulations continues to be lax such that significant human rights problems remain in several key areas including violence against women, trafficking in women and children, forced prostitution, societal discrimination against ethnic minorities, and so forth. There were no reports of politically motivated killings by government agents. However, at least 81 criminal suspects were killed during arrest attempts between January and November, 1998.

Police killed 7 prisoners during attempts to escape from custody. In January, prison guards shot and killed 4 inmates attempting to escape from the Bangkok remand prison. The guards were charged with homicide, but released on bail.

Some investigations into extra judicial killings were conducted but there were few reports of any police or military officers being prosecuted. 38

cases had been brought to court by November, none had been prosecuted by the end of 1998.

In September, the investigation into the 1996 case of the killing of 6 suspected drug dealers was revived. Pretrial hearings were still going on at the end of 1998.

No developments were reported in the 1996 killing of environmental protester Thong-in Kaew-wattha, nor in the 1995 death of conservation activist, Winai Chantamano. However, the 1996 killing of farmer activist, Joon Bhoonkhuntod, during police arrest was found unjustified. Even so, the officer responsible remained in active service.

Muslim separatist organizations in the south carried out bomb attacks that resulted in several deaths in January.

In March, Burmese troops entered Thailand to destroy a displaced persons' camp. They killed two people before retreating but were not engaged by Thai troops.

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances, nor were there any developments in the 1994 disappearance of environmental activist, Suchada Khamfubutra, nor the 1991 disappearance of Thanong Po-an, the Labor Congress of Thailand President. Nor was there any further news on the fate of the remaining 38 missing prodemocracy protesters listed as missing following the May, 1992, demonstration suppression.

In January, a lawyers' association petitioned the House Committee on Human Rights to conduct a hearing on a case in which 3 members of the New Pattani United Liberation Organization were allegedly beaten in custody. No moves have been taken to investigate the allegations.

Local NGO's and Members of Parliament assisted several female suspects to pursue legal action against police officers whom they accused of raping them

in detention. In February, a police officer was suspended after a medical examination confirmed that a 14-year-old girl had been sexually molested by the officer while in custody.

In July, the media continued to call for government action in the 1997 case of 4 Lao women who were raped in the Rayong District Police Station; 3 of the officers involved were transferred to inactive posts. A third senior officer was found guilty of negligence and received minor disciplinary action. There were no criminal charges pursued, nor were the officers fined.

In January, police used force against a large, disorganized protest staged on a highway in Bangkok by workers from an auto parts factory.

There were just 13 full-time doctors and 7 dentists covering a prison population of 176,114. Three of the doctors were on "educational leave". All the part-time doctors were terminated in 1998.

As of October, of the 176,114 prison inmates, approximately 42,000 charged with narcotics violations. About 15% of the prison population were pretrial detainees, usually not segregated from the general prison population.

- As of the end of 1998, there were 49 asylum seekers of concern to the UNHCR incarcerated at the Immigration Detention Center, 41 of whom were Burmese. Another 24 Burmese activists remain in the Police Special Detention Center.

There were no known political prisoners apart from the Muslim, Sorayut Sakunnanasantisat, still serving a 12 year term for leading a political protest in Pattani in 1990.

There were no reports of violence or physical retaliation against journalists for their reporting.

The new Constitution provides for the right to engage in academic pursuits and academic freedom is supposed to be respected.

There was still no legislation pertaining to the treatment of refugees, but the government officially agreed to a formal role for the UNHCR in monitoring and providing protection to about 112,000 refugees from Burma, mostly ethnic minorities, a significant expansion of the UNHCR's previous mandate. The new Constitution created a provision for the establishment of a permanent 11-member National Commission on Human Rights, which would be a government rather than an independent body. NGO's, the news media and human rights organizations lobbied to increase membership for nongovernmental organizations and to strengthen the commissions independent and investigative powers. Establishment of this Commission was still pending passage of a National Human Rights Commission Law by the National Assembly.

Under the Criminal Code, rape is illegal. Under a 1994 pilot program at 3 Bangkok police stations, 13 female investigators were employed to handle and encourage reportings of rapes and abuses. But, according to the US State Department's report, expansion of this program is limited as police and military academies do not accept female students.

As of 1998, NGO's claimed that, over the previous 7 years, the average work related deaths was 25 in 1,000, underlining disparities in working conditions (US Department of State, 1999).

1999

Although the US State Department's Thailand Country Report for 1999 is not available yet, there are a number of Internet sites including Human Rights Watch World Report for 1999 which points out their lingering concern about thousands of Burmese women and girls being trafficked into Thai brothels where they are said to work under conditions tantamount to slavery. Subject to debt bondage, illegal confinement, various forms of sexual and physical abuse, not to mention exposure to HIV in the brothels, they then face wrongful arrest as illegal immigrants if they try to escape or if the brothels are raided by police. Once arrested, it is claimed that they may face further abuse in detention centers.

The report alleges that Thai police and border patrol officials are involved in both the trafficking and the brothel operations, but that they routinely escape punishment as, for the most part, do the brothel agents, owners, pimps and clients (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999).

Judging from press and human rights reports, it is not possible to conclude that the human rights situation in Thailand has seen any measurable improvement in 1999.

Analysis

Despite the consolidation of democratic processes subsequent to 1992, and the ratification of many international instruments for the protection of human rights in more recent years, there is still a sense that the measures being taken are not enough to ensure the protection of human rights. The ongoing existence of human rights violations in the post-1992 years, not unlike previous decades, is not in dispute. Even US State Department's country reports on human rights practices for Thailand in the post-1992 years vary very little.

It is possible that the United States may feel that being exceedingly critical would be counter-productive. Even so, for example, although there were no reports of politically-motivated disappearances by 1996, that same year, there is alleged to have been unusually strong measures taken against certain academic research, and such reports of harassment triggered by academic research continue even in 1999.

The issue remains as to why this would be the case. If there is an intrinsic link between democracy and human rights, and democracy has been making inroads, what conclusions should be drawn if the human rights situation does not seem to have improved in qualitative, let alone quantitative, senses?

The massive volume of human rights-related articles taken up in newspapers and journals in the post-1992 years, as seen from the

aforementioned outline of the human rights situation in Thailand from 1992 to 1999, a steady stream of at least 200 a month, approximately half of which also touch on democracy, in each of the main newspapers published in English, indicate that there has been little, if any, improvement in the human rights situation in these years. One could argue that the situation has deteriorated.

There are some 1,800 entries in *The Nation* alone for January - August, 1999, ranging, for example, from freedom of the press, the right to a fair trial, discrimination against marginalized groups, the rights of women, children and ethnic minorities, subterfuged modern-day slavery, freedom of religion, and so on. The author believes that part of the reason is the inability to deal with the forces of structural oppression which are part and parcel of current development strategies. Some may argue that the fact that the figures have not declined may not necessarily mean that the situation has worsened, it could mean that there has merely been improved transparency with more open reporting than in the past, hence an apparent increase. The author would also like to argue that the apparent escalation is also due to a real increase in opportunities for violations to occur in the modern context, an aspect which is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 by looking at the issue of development and "trade-offs".