

FREEDOM

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AGM 2019

**HUMAN RIGHTS
VICTORY**

**VOICES OF 4 FAMILIES
WHO SUFFERED
ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES**

**WRITE A LETTER,
CHANGE A LIFE**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
THAILAND**

VOICES OF 4 FAMILIES

Who Suffered Enforced Disappearances

Angkhana Neelaphaijit is the wife of lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit, a human right lawyers, who was disappeared on 12th March 2005 after representing suspects who complained of being beaten by police officers to make a confession. The last person to see lawyer Somchai said that a group of 5-6 men pushed him into a car. Until now, no one knows the fate of lawyer Somchai and his family have received no compensation. At the end of 2012, the Supreme Court closed the case.

"From the day that lawyer Somchai disappeared, I tried to cooperate and show to the government that I paid serious attention in following this case. I went everywhere that was believed to be where he was killed and his body destroyed, whether an area for destroying explosives in a military camp, or a garbage dump by a river where it was believed that the ashes and bones of Somchai were discarded. I went to court every day of the trial of 5 policemen. During the 5-month court hearing, evidence was presented of a bone fragment that had been burned in an 200 litre oil tank and dumped into the Mae Klong River. But it was identified not as the bone of Somchai but of an unknown person, whose identity was never investigated."

"Although the government has helped in term of finance, it does not mean that the government is free from the obligation of bringing the wrongdoers to justice. After the case of Somchai, I did not think that there would be any more forced disappearances. Regrettably, we still see more victims of forced disappearance in society. I am like the relatives of other missing victims who for their whole lives might never find justice. But I still believe that everything that I have done for the past 15 years will make the new generation see the importance, value, and human dignity of every person in society and step up to affirm that we disagree with the unfair use of state power."

After 15 years, the case of lawyer Somchai still seeks justice.



Angkhana Neelaphaijit

Pinnapha Phrueksapan is the wife of "Billy" Porlajee Rakchongcharoen, a Karen leader, and father of 5 children, who was arrested on 17th April 2014 by Kaeng Krachan National Park officials allegedly for the illegal possession 6 bottles of wild honey—and he then disappeared with no trace. No one knows his fate. The court dismissed a request for an inquiry into the disappearance of Billy claiming insufficient evidence. The DSI (Department of Special Investigation) has accepted it as a special case and started an investigation in late June 2018.

"Billy" Porlajee is an ordinary villager with no rank or position. He sought information in order to help his village, which is inside the area of the national park before the park was designated. In 2011, park officials burned down the house of his grandfather Koi and those of other villagers as a way of evicting them. Billy tried to find ways in helping his grandfather to receive justice. He stood for membership the local SAO (Subdistrict Administrative Organization), and when he was accepted, he thought that he would be able to contact external networks and it would be easy to help his grandfather. But after being a member of the SAO for a year, he was disappeared on 17th April 2014.

"When it just happened, I did not know how Billy had disappeared or since when—I just knew from his brother. Billy's brother called me in the afternoon of 18th April asking 'Have I seen Billy come back home, back to his family?' I replied that 'I haven't seen him yet' and asked his brother 'Has anything happened to Billy?' Then his brother told me that Billy had gone left on he afternoon of the 17th, but some villagers came to tell him that some officials took him away. He did not think that anything would happen, thinking it as a general incident where people got inspected and taken to a police station. But this time, it did not go as his brother thought."

"At present, this case has made no progress. Recently, the DSI called to asked me 'Does Billy's computer have anything which could be used as evidence? He asked about the video of the burning of the house of grandfather Koi and the video of officials cutting wood in the forest. He asked whether Billy's computer had these videos. I told them that it was gone, it was all deleted. The officials told me that they would come to me at the house to get the computer for investigation by telling me that as officials they must follow procedures. So I told them that they could take the computer for investigation—but not keep it. Once they finished checking, please return it.'"



Pinnapha Phrueksapan

Adisorn Pho-an is the son of Thanong Pho-an, a former president of the Labour Congress of Thailand, who was disappeared on 19th June 1991 during the time of the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) military junta. He was a labour leader who had a role in supporting the collective bargaining of workers and actively opposed the NPKC, being quoted by the media as saying 'I'm not afraid of the cleaver' before he was disappeared.

"Thanong Pho-an was a very strong political leader. It was the only era that the labour movement was powerful in Thailand—1988 to 1991. Thanong was a former president of the Labour Congress of Thailand that pushed for several laws. For example, Thanong pushed for a minimum wage and also a Social Security Act that had been demanded for a long time but which had not received a response until approved under the government of General Chatichai in 1990.

"After my father was disappeared on 19th June 1991, from a life that was great, living comfortably, my family fell apart because there was no longer the head of the family. I did not get to study, and my middle brother also had a brain tumour. My mother was a nurse. In the past, my mother had salary of 8000 baht to raise her children, which was obviously not enough for three kids. I and my middle brother did not get to study, only my little brother got to go to school. Did the government help with anything? Or compensate for anything? Only recently, the Ministry of Justice contacted me and told me that there was a cabinet resolution about a year ago about helping. So, I just shouted at them that they don't have to help me. When a person is hungry, you should bring them food, but today when the person is full, why bring it to him?"

“Today, the thing I want is to take the wrongdoer for punishment and get my father's bones to make merit. I will not take money any more. Today, things have changed. In the end, with all the papers or evidence, there is still no progress. So I know that in different things you must rely on yourself first. The government does not care or compensate. This is Thailand.”



Adisorn Pho-an

Ng Shui Meng is the wife of Sombath Somphone, a leading civil society activist from Lao PDR and a winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, who disappeared on 15th December 2012. CCTV video showed that his car was stopped by police at a checkpoint taken away in another car. After that, nobody heard any more from him. The evidence confirms that Lao officials were definitely involved in what happened.

"As the wife of a victim of enforced disappearance, I totally understand what Angkhana and her family must have gone through during the past 15 years. I too have gone through pain. When I sit and look at the families of missing persons around me, I feel more angry because of the justice that is not given to the victim. I feel so angry that the state crime has been left unpunished, that this kind of crime can still continue in our country.

"Let's see what the disappeared, beloved by their family members, did. What laws did they violate? Somchai Neelaphaijit was a well-known human right lawyers. He provided legal assistance to Muslims in the 3 southernmost provinces and campaigned against a government agency to stop torture and he was forcibly disappeared. Sombath Somphone was a highly respected community leader. He was a person who actively campaigned for environmental protection and the land rights of poor people in Lao. "Billy" Porlajee Rakchongcharoen was a Karen activist that everyone knows. He fought for the rights of the Karen minority to have access to forest land where their ancestors had lived for a long time, and also fought for environmental resources.



Are these people criminals? Or they are just ordinary people who are interested in society and rise up to protect voiceless people in our society. That is the crime and injustice of enforced disappearance, which has become the reason for the families of the disappeared to fight to make our voices heard and for the truth and justice for our loved ones. We are ordinary citizens that expect the government and government agencies to support and protect us, not turned into our enemies. But we are repeatedly made to feel that we are criminals, that the persons we love, who are missing, are against the law.

It's time to bring justice and truth for the families of the disappeared."



Ng Shui Meng



5.5 MILLION MESSAGES

Voices from common people who join the campaign

WRITE FOR RIGHTS!

5,562,795 is the number of messages that Amnesty supporters all around the world have sent in 2019, a record for the Write for Right campaign, where worldwide supporters get together to send messages in support of human right defenders through different ways, such as letters, e-mails, and tweets. Your small actions have created change for the disabled in Kyrgyzstan, such as Gulzar Duishenova. In 2002, Gulzar lost the use of her legs after a car accident, but she never gave up on her fate. She aspired to help the disabled to live with dignity, and travel freely from place to place. However, she suffered discrimination due to that fact that society believed that women should not express themselves and usually see a disabled person as a “person with incompleteness.”

From the Write for Right campaign last year, the Kyrgyzstan parliament has now ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in promoting an end to discrimination, health services and access to buildings, employment and travel. Thanks to everybody for writing postcards of encouragement to Gulzar because the small actions of everybody are really meaningful.

EGYPTIAN PHOTOJOURNALIST SHAWKAN, IS RELEASED



©Amnesty International

On 4th March 2019, **Mahmoud Abu Zeid**, also known as **Shawkan**, an Egyptian photojournalist, was released after 5 years in prison on made-up charges. The release of Shawkan ended the pain of him and his family. Despite being release, he must still do 12 hours self-reporting to the police for the next 5 years.

Shawkan was arrested merely for taking photos of violence by the security forces during a protest in Egypt in 2013. He was imprisoned, tortured and also refused medical treatment in spite of being seriously ill from Hepatitis C.

Thousands of Amnesty supporters helped in sending encouraging messages to him in the 2016 Write for Rights programme. Over 30,000 names requested his release, including supporters of Amnesty International in Thailand too.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019



Amnesty International Thailand organized the 2019 Annual General Meeting for over 50 members and supporters to participate in expressing their opinions on past work and collectively setting the organization's directions for the future, along with electing 1 committee member and a treasurer to replace outgoing committee members and also choosing the youth representative from Thailand to join the General Assembly at South Africa.

The current committee of Amnesty International Thailand (from left to right)

Sasawat Khomniyawanit	Treasurer
Kornkanok Khumta	Committee Member
Parinya Boonridrerthaikul	Committee Chairperson
Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal	Youth Committee Member
Vasin Pongkao	Committee Member

The youth representative of Thailand to the General Assembly is **Tattep Ruangprapaikitseree**. After returning from the conference in South Africa, he has the responsibility of working with youth in Thailand to promote human rights issue with Amnesty International.

5 YEARS SINCE BILLY'S DISAPPEARANCE

Family Still Waiting for Justice



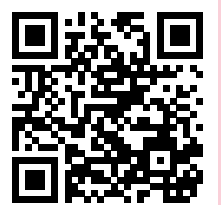
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On 17th April 2019, Amnesty International issued a statement on the 5th anniversary of the disappearance of Billy or Porlajee Rakchongcharoen, a Karen activist who disappeared after being arrested by Kaeng Krachan National Park officials. The statement requested the next government to pass the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act. The emphasis was that today should be another day that reminds the current government and next government of their obligations to protect and defend the rights of citizens.

Pinnapha Phrueksapan or Mueno, Billy's wife, posted on Facebook a picture of a letter written to her husband saying that on Songkran day, most people probably have fun, but her family is still in sorrow or has only a little fun. However, she still hopes and waits for justice for Billy and his family.

"Every problem has a solution. All of us, whether villagers, officials, or people holding positions, turn our attention to negotiating, not just looking for the faults of villagers. Also, the government must consider quickly passing and strictly enforcing laws on missing persons in to protect rights throughout Thailand and the world." This was her last message posted on Facebook.

Scan for more information
<https://www.amnesty.or.th/en/latest/blog/699>



HAKEEM RECEIVES AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

Hakeem Al-Araibi, a former Bahraini national team footballer, has been officially granted Australian citizenship. Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Australia, came to congratulate Hakeem personally, and Hakeem promised that he would do his best playing football for Australia.

Hakeem revealed his feelings when he received Australia citizenship with other 207 people from 44 countries after passing the citizenship test: *"I'm so happy to get citizenship today. Now that I've got citizenship, I feel 100 per cent safe that no one in the world can follow me like Bahrain, now that I'm Australian and in a safe country."*

Hakeem fled Bahrain in 2014 and requested refuge in Australia, after Bahraini officials accused him of involvement in the "Arab Spring". However, he was detained by Thai



© William WEST / AFP

officials for over 2 months after arriving on his honeymoon in November last year. This became huge news and attracted attention from all over the world. Amnesty International Thailand and other dozens of countries jointly campaigned for his release. Over 135,000 supporters worldwide sent requests to the Thai government. Eventually, in February 11, he was released and arrived in Australia the next day. One month later, he gained Australia citizenship.



The Journey is a beautiful picture book written and illustrated by Francesca Sanna, the Italian author and illustrator of children's books who currently lives in Switzerland. The Thai version is translated by Sumalee Bumroongsuk. The story shows a picture of immigration that is full of energy that drives forward a discourse regarding refugees and every aspect of immigration. It is inspired by the true story of two girls in a refugee centre in Italy, conveyed through simple graphics but with feeling, hope, and the desire for peace in this world.

The Journey narrates the life of a family which once lived happily together until war erupted and took away the father. As a result, the mother must flee with her two children from their home country to "a new peaceful home" where they can restart their lives with happiness.

This book won a prize at the annual youth book contest of Amnesty International United Kingdom in 2017 (the Amnesty-Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Honour winner 2017) for reminding us that "we all have the right to live in a safe place" and it can also be used as instruction materials for students to understand about refugees.

The picture book, *The Journey*, is published and distributed by Nanmeebooks at 145 baht, and is available at leading bookstores across the country.

Members of Amnesty International Thailand can order online at the Amnesty Shop with a 10% discount.

Scan for
online orders

<https://www.amnesty.org.th/en/amnesty-shop>



THE JOURNEY

A Tale with a Powerful Reflection on Immigration

Donate 20 Baht = 1 Booklet

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Amnesty International Thailand would like to invite you to donate money for printing the "Human Rights Passport - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Booklets"

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which Thailand is one of forty eight countries that voted in favour of the Declaration, Amnesty International Thailand, therefore, would like to invite you to join the project for the publishing budget of 70,000 UDHR Booklets gives to schools, universities and communities throughout Thailand.



Donor Package "Booklet"–The Universal Declaration of Human Rights



	CONTRIBUTOR	SUPPORTER	FOLLOWER
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Donate	Donor Package (Amnesty bag, candle, T-shirt, notebook+pen, 1-year membership) and a certificate of appreciation	Donor Package (Amnesty bag, candle, T-shirt, 1-year membership) and a certificate of appreciation	Donor Package (Amnesty candle, T-shirt, 1-year membership) and a certificate of appreciation
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Be invited to attend the project closing ceremony	✓	✓	✓
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In case of donation of less than 50 books, the donor will be invited to attend events and have the name printed on the list of donors.

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AMNESTY
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WHAT IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

Amnesty International is an organization of ordinary people from diverse career fields who cannot maintain silence in the face of injustice and human rights violations no matter where in the world and who take action in the belief that every person can campaign for the respect, protection, and defence of human rights. Amnesty International was established in 1961, and the organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. Today, there are more than 7 million supporters in over 150 countries.

After the 6th October 1976 massacre of Thai students, Amnesty became known in Thailand from its prisoner of conscience campaign. Over 100,000 letters from people all around the world were sent to the Thai government requesting the release of students and citizens. At present, Amnesty has over 1,000 members in Thailand carries out a wide range of activities for promoting knowledge, understanding, and campaigns for protection and defence of human rights.

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