



The NHRCT recommends the proper management of assemblies with due respect of children's rights; conflicts can be resolved by safe space for political dialogue

Ms. Pornprapai Ganjanarintr, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT), issued a letter dated 10 September B.E. 2564 (2021) to the Commissioner-General of the Royal Thai Police, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Social Development and Human Security, proposing the NHRCT's recommendations regarding the rights of the child including child protection and safety in political protests at Din Daeng Triangle. Opinions and concerns over the violence occurred during protests affecting children and youth were collected from the online Forum on the Rights of the Child and the Situation of Political Assemblies which the NHRCT organized on 30 August 2021 with representatives from relevant government agencies, human rights organizations, media, academics and psychologists, including children and youth. Considering the principles set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that Thailand is a party and has obligations to comply with, the NHRCT; therefore, has recommendations to relevant agencies as follows:

1. There should be a public forum specifically organized for children and youth who joined protests with representatives of relevant government agencies to listen to their views. The forum will serve as the safe space where they can exercise rights and liberties without violence both physically and mentally and to seek common ground for solution.

2. Government agencies should have appropriate guidelines and procedures for treating children and youth in assembly areas. It includes children and youth care system for the whole period of protest, from beginning to end, and a screening process to assure safety. A specific symbol should be assigned to children under 18 years old so that officers can easily notice and provide appropriate care. In case a child is arrested, multidisciplinary officer is required to be included in the process.

3. Government officials should provide appropriate preventive measures to guarantee the safe exercise of freedom of assembly, and should separately treat violent from non-violent protesters.

4. The Royal Thai Police should provide training for crowd control officers in performing their duties in accordance with international standards with clear guidelines and dimension of children and youth.

5. The government should arrange coordination between the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society and the Royal Thai Police to safeguard, protect and prevent the dissemination of personal information of children under the age of 18. It should also include measures to prevent stigmatization, bullying and hatred incitement in the online world by people with different opinions.

In addition to proposed recommendations to relevant agencies, the forum also raised concerns about parents bringing in their young children under the age of 18 to rallies which likely turned to violent. The forum viewed that, apart from potentially being harmful, their cognitive development could be affected by instigated violence.

The Chairperson also added that the NHRCT, by the Working Group to Investigate the Cases of Political Assemblies, previously held the meeting with academics and peace supporters to discuss the conflict solution by non-violent demonstration. The meeting concluded that violence in political rallies had affected the right to life and security of person of both government officials and demonstrators, including people residing in the area. Therefore, it is important that all parties must be aware and find a common solution.

“What the society should expect and joint mobilization should aim for is the so-called “safe socio-political space”, which could arise from a peaceful, constructive and open-minded dialogue between government agencies and demonstrators. The NHRCT also reaffirms our duty to protect human rights of all parties, including those affected by protests,” said the NHRCT Chairperson.

Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand

10 September 2021