

STATEMENT:

Thailand must not send Uyghurs back to China at the request of the Chinese Government

Following the escape of three Uyghurs from immigration detention in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province on 11 July 2022, and given the fact that all three have not yet been found¹, we expect that the Chinese authorities are displeased about the escape of the Uyghurs.

This has prompted the Immigration Bureau to relocate Uyghurs who have been detained in various immigration detention centers across the country for more than eight years² to the Bangkok immigration detention center. The total number of relocated people is now 44 persons. This action raised concerns among the civil society network monitoring the Uyghur situation that the Thai Government will force the Uyghurs to return to their country of origin at the request of the Chinese government. This is similar to what happened in 2015 when Thailand forced 109 Uyghurs to return to China, and their fate of these persons remains unknown to this day. That incident caused the international community to highly condemn the Thai government for failing to respect the principle of non-refoulement, which is customary international law. Thailand must not make the same mistake twice. There is no reasonable reason for the Chinese Government to ask the Thai Government to force these Uyghurs to return to China where they will face persecution. Thailand is a member of the United Nations and is a state party to many international human rights laws such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Disregarding Treatment and Punishment. Therefore, Thailand should respect the international principles and standards set out by the United Nations which have been adopted by countries across the world.

On 20 July 2016, Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha delivered a statement at the Leader's Summit on Refugees, claiming that the Thai Government and the people of Thailand are generous, and have provided humanitarian assistance to refugees during the past four decades. The Prime Minister pledged to the international community that Thailand will consider laws to prevent and combat torture and enforce

¹ <https://www.benarnews.org/thai/news/th-uyghur-escape-07142022134824.html>

² <https://www.voanews.com/a/rights-groups-urge-thailand-not-to-force-captive-uyghurs-back-to-china-/6637800.html>

disappearances, and strengthen the implementation of the principle of non-refoulement.³ Moreover, on 8 July 2022, Mr. Don Pramudwinai, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken signed the United States – Thailand Communique on Strategy Alliance and Partnership to uphold humanitarian principles, including the importance of respecting the principle of non-refoulement. Both events demonstrate the Thai Government’s stance on respecting the aforementioned principles.⁴ We commend the Thai Government for making these commitments at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, and expect it will carry out these commitments for the prestige of Thailand in the international community.

We, the civil society network working on migrant populations and continuously monitoring the situation of Uyghurs, urge the Thai Government to:

1. Uphold the international commitments and do not force Uyghurs to return to face harm
2. Considering ending the indefinite detention of Uyghurs
3. Allow international organizations and civil society organizations to participate in urgently solving the problems for Uyghurs. In particular, allow UNHCR to assist in ensuring their right to seek asylum.
4. Allow Uyghurs to leave the country on voluntarily basis, with human dignity and safely resettle in the country of their choice which has voluntarily accepted them.
5. There are sustainable solutions that exist because many of these Uyghurs have relatives in different countries. Travel to a third country should be allowed on a family reunification basis, in accordance with international practice.

List of signatories

1. People’s Empowerment Foundation
2. Peace Rights Foundation
3. Asylum Access Thailand

³ <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/5d5bd05815e39c306001eacf?cate=5d5bcb4e15e39c3060006834>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/united-states-thailand-communique-on-strategic-alliance-and-partnership/>

4. Refugee Rights Litigation Project, Peace Way Foundation
5. Migrant Working Group
6. Coalition for the Rights of Refugees and Stateless Persons
7. Khon Chuay Khon Foundation
8. Council for Humanitarian Networking of Sheikhul Islam Office

Bangkok

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