



## Thailand Political Context Briefing (12 December 2025)

### Executive Overview: Why This Moment Requires Attention

Thailand is entering a critical political moment defined by the convergence of political transition, militarized security narratives, and unresolved structural injustice. This situation is rooted in the ongoing crisis generated by the military-designed 2017 Constitution, which continues to block democratic reform and civilian accountability.

These dynamics are not isolated. Together, they create a heightened, foreseeable, and preventable risk environment for human rights defenders—particularly Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and community-based movements advocating for land rights, environmental rights justice, equity, social justice, and constitutional reform.

This risk is not theoretical.

Protection International (PI) Thailand has just completed the accompaniment of more than 1,000 women and human rights defenders participating in the Walk for the Future, organised by the Thai NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-COD)—a 55-kilometre, five-day peaceful march calling for constitutional reform and a 100% elected Constitution Drafting Assembly.

The scale, visibility, and peaceful nature of this mobilization underscore both the breadth and legitimacy of public demand and the heightened exposure of defenders at this moment.

Experience in Thailand and comparable contexts demonstrates that such periods rarely produce immediate, overt repression. Instead, repression typically unfolds through law, security rhetoric, surveillance, class-based and gendered intimidation, and administrative harassment. This makes early, coordinated international engagement essential.

### Context: Three Interlocking Crises

#### 1. Political Transition and Governance Vacuum

The dissolution of Parliament on the night of 11 December 2025 has initiated a new election process under a caretaker administration. While formally constitutional, this transition weakens democratic oversight and accountability, expanding the discretionary power of unelected institutions.

Historically, such moments in Thailand have enabled:

Reduced scrutiny of coercive institutions

Expanded use of administrative and legal controls

Increased pressure on defenders raising structural or political demands

For HRDs, this creates an environment where exceptional measures become normalized, and where the space to defend rights is increasingly constrained.

## 2. Militarized Security Context (Thai–Cambodian Border)

Escalating tensions along the Thai–Cambodian border have elevated national security narratives and expanded the political relevance of military actors. These narratives are increasingly used to:

Justify restrictions on peaceful assembly and expression

Normalize surveillance and monitoring of activists

Create conditions for potential disruption or delay of political processes

This context significantly increases risks for defenders engaged in peacebuilding, governance reform, and accountability, and creates a permissive environment for repression framed as “security management.”

## 3. Structural Reform and Constitutional Deadlock

People’s movements—mainly networks led by the Thai NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-COD)—are advancing clear and uncompromising demands:

A new constitution drafted in full, not piecemeal amendments

A 100% elected Constitution Drafting Assembly

These demands reflect widespread recognition that elections alone cannot resolve entrenched power structures embedded in the 2017 Constitution. Advocacy for constitutional reform has therefore become a high-risk area of human rights work, exposing defenders to retaliation through legal, political, and reputational means.

### Implications for Human Rights Defenders and WHRDs

In the current convergence, repression is most likely to be systemic, normalized, and legally framed, rather than overtly violent.

Key risk patterns include:

#### Judicial Harassment and Criminalization

Strategic lawsuits, revived charges, repeated summonses, and prolonged proceedings designed to exhaust defenders.

As this briefing is being written (11–12 December 2025), two prominent human rights defenders from the People’s Movement for a Just Society (P-Move) Mr. Thiranet Chaisuwan (Chair of P-Move and a leader of the Southern Peasants’ Federation of Thailand) and Mr. Jamnong Nuphan (P-Move adviser) appeared before the Dusit District Court for the first witness hearing in a criminal case under Thailand’s Public Assembly Act (2015).

They are accused of organizing a peaceful assembly allegedly in violation of a 50-metre prohibition zone around Government House. The case stems from a 24-day peaceful protest (5–28 February 2024) calling on the government to honour long-standing commitments on land and livelihood rights.

### Digital Surveillance and Online Attacks

Doxxing, disinformation, smear campaigns, and monitoring of communications—often sexualized and gendered when targeting WHRDs, as clearly seen in the case of Senator and prominent WHRD Angkhana Neelapajit.

### Shrinking Civic Space

Restrictions on assemblies, advocacy activities, and public expression under “security” or “public order” justifications.

### Gender-Specific Repression of WHRDs

Moral attacks, family-based threats, sexualized intimidation, and reputational violence aimed at silencing women leaders.

### Criminalization of Solidarity

Human rights activists, lawyers, researchers, journalists, and companions are increasingly targeted for supporting community struggles. Human rights defenders who continue to defend human rights are publicly attacked for allegedly “ignoring” the conflict with Cambodia, accused of lacking patriotism, and portrayed as not loving their country. This represents a weaponization of nationalism to delegitimize the right to defend human rights, framing peaceful advocacy as disloyalty rather than as a protected and essential democratic activity.

Together, these patterns undermine the right to defend human rights and erode the conditions necessary for peaceful democratic participation.

### Possible Scenarios (Next 4–8 Weeks)

#### Elections Proceed amid Containment

Elections move forward, but under conditions of intensified surveillance, legal pressure, and intimidation aimed at limiting reform-oriented advocacy—while effectively blocking a 100% elected Constitution Drafting Assembly and preventing the drafting of a new constitution.

#### Security-Based Disruption or Delay

Border tensions are used—explicitly or implicitly—to justify restrictions on campaigning,

peaceful assemblies, or electoral timelines, reinforcing exceptional measures under the guise of national security.

#### Post-Election Legitimacy Crisis

Elections occur, but failure to address constitutional reform demands leads to renewed mobilization by people's movements, followed by selective repression, judicial harassment, and legal crackdowns.

Across all scenarios, risks for HRDs and WHRDs are likely to increase rather than diminish, particularly for grassroots and community-based defenders.

#### Why This Matters for the International Community

This moment calls for preventive, principled engagement, not reactive concern after harm has already occurred.

Diplomats, UN bodies, and funders play a crucial role in:

Deterring escalation through early and visible diplomatic engagement

Signaling clearly that repression will carry international consequences

Sustaining protection, resilience, and accountability mechanisms for defenders

Silence or delayed response risks normalizing the misuse of law and security narratives against peaceful human rights work and people's movements.

#### Priority Actions for International Actors

##### Diplomatic Missions and UN Bodies

Closely monitor the situation of grassroots and community-based HRDs and WHRDs, including legal cases, threats, and digital attacks

Engage in early and preventive diplomacy, raising concerns directly with Thai authorities in close consultation with grassroots and community-based HRDs, WHRDs, and people's movements

Publicly and privately affirm the legitimacy of human rights work and the protection of civic space

Integrate gender-responsive analysis and practical implementation into all political and human rights engagement

##### International Funders

Maintain—and where possible increase—flexible funding for protection, movement-building for human rights and democracy with grassroots and community-based movements, legal defense, and psychosocial support for collective care

Support collective and movement-based protection strategies, not only individual measures, and not only English-speaking HRDs based in Bangkok

Anticipate increased demand for emergency assistance and rapid response

Avoid funding conditions that could expose partners to additional risk during political transition

### Core Message

Periods of political transition and heightened security discourse are predictable moments of risk for human rights defenders especially women.

The peaceful mobilization of more than 1,000 human rights defenders walking together for constitutional reform demonstrates that demands for democracy are broad, legitimate, and deeply rooted in Thai society.

Women Human Rights Defenders and community movements are not threats to stability—they are its foundation.

Protection delayed is protection denied, and in Thailand, protection has been long delayed and systematically denied.

Early, coordinated, and principled international engagement is essential to prevent further harm and to uphold human rights and democratic standards in Thailand.

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