

FIDH – International Federation for Human Rights

Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR)

Freedom Bridge

THAILAND

**Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
(CEDAW)**

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1. Women in prison

Since the previous CEDAW review of Thailand in July 2017, very high numbers of women have continued to remain behind bars. Despite the CEDAW’s recommendation in 2017 to take “urgent measures to reduce the number of women in detention, including by applying non-custodial sentences,”¹ the Thai authorities have failed to implement non-custodial alternatives to detention. In addition, women in prison have consistently experienced high levels of overcrowding and poor detention conditions that have not addressed their gender-specific challenges and needs.

1.1. Persistently high rates of female prisoners

Since the previous CEDAW review, Thailand has continued to incarcerate women at rates that have been surpassed by very few other countries in the world.

According to the latest comparative statistics published by the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research (ICPR) in February 2025, Thailand had the world’s second highest incarceration rate of women and the fifth highest number of women prisoners.² According to the most recent statistics from the Thai Ministry of Justice’s Department of Corrections (DoC) as of 1 May 2025, Thailand had a total prison population of

¹ UN CEDAW, *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Thailand*, July 24, 2017; UN Doc. CEDAW/C/THA/CO/6-7, para. 45

² ICPR, *Female prison population growing faster than male, worldwide*, 12 February 2025

290,184 inmates (254,476 men and 35,708 women). The female prison population constituted 12% of its total prison population.

The latest number of female inmates was only slightly (11%) lower than that recorded at the time of the previous CEDAW review of Thailand in July 2017, which stood at 40,389, or 13% of a total prison population of 300,910. In addition, between January 2023 and May 2025, the number of female inmates increased at a much faster rate than that of male inmates in the same period. The number of female prisoners went up 17%, compared to the 10% increase in male inmates.

Despite a reform of drug laws undertaken in 2021, the ongoing criminalization of personal use and possession of drugs has led to persistently high rates of inmates incarcerated for drug-related offenses.³ The number of inmates imprisoned for drug-related offenses has regularly accounted for the vast majority of the total prison population. In May 2025, 206,574 inmates (183,347 men and 23,227 women), or about 71% of the total prison population, were incarcerated for drug-related offenses. The proportion of women incarcerated for drug-related offenses compared to the total prison population was 65%, which was lower than the 63% for men. Since August 2017, this proportion has ranged between 65 and 84%.

Women convicted of drug offenses are driven by poverty and marginalization.⁴ Despite being minor offenders, women often receive disproportionately harsh sentences as a result of the Thai judiciary's failure to take into account their role and other vulnerabilities.⁵

1.2. Women disproportionately sentenced to death for drug-related offenses

The imposition of the death penalty for drug-related crimes has disproportionately affected women.

According to the latest official statistics, as of March 2025, 269 (70%) out of 383 inmates under death sentence had been convicted of drug-related offenses. Although women constituted a small minority of inmates sentenced to death, nearly all of them had been convicted of drug-related offenses. As of March 2025, 37 (or 95%) of the 39 female prisoners under death sentence had been convicted of drug-related offenses, which was 28% higher than the proportion (67%) of male prisoners under death sentence for drug-related offenses.

Since October 2017, the number of female prisoners under death sentence for drug-related offenses has decreased by 88%, from 74 inmates to 37. Between October 2017 and May 2025, the proportion of female prisoners under death sentence for drug-related crimes ranged from 83% to 100%, compared to that of male prisoners, which ranged from 46% to 67%.

³ FIDH, *Thailand Annual Prison Report 2025*, 27 March 2025

⁴ UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, *End of mission statement Official visit to Thailand (2-13 December 2024)*, 13 December 2024

⁵ H.S.A Journal, *Thai Drug Laws and Practices: Disproportionate Punishment Against Women Minor Drug Offenders*, 17 January 2020

1.3. Women prisoners subjected to poor detention conditions

Information collected by FIDH from interviews with 16 former female prisoners who were detained in eight facilities between 2021 and 2024 showed that the basic rights and specific needs of female inmates were not being fulfilled.⁶ It is likely that female prisoners in other prisons across Thailand experienced conditions similar to those described by former inmates in those facilities.

The Thai authorities' failure to bring detention conditions in line with international standards is inconsistent with the CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 33, which recommends that states "pay special attention" to the situation of female prisoners and apply "international guidance and standards on the treatment of women in detention." Discrimination in accessing gender-specific services may, under certain circumstances, constitute discrimination under Article 1 of the Convention.

Severe overcrowding

Women's prisons remain overcrowded. According to the latest official statistics as of May 2025, the total occupancy rate for correctional facilities where women were incarcerated exceeded its intended capacity by 2% (35,708 prisoners for an official capacity of 35,078). Some of these prisons were among the country's most overcrowded. For example, the women's section of Buriram Provincial Prison operated at 488% of its intended capacity⁷ and the Central Women's Correctional Institution (CWCI) in Bangkok operated at 64% of its intended capacity.⁸

Former prisoners reported that the persistently high levels of overcrowding resulted in insufficient sleeping space, which negatively impacted living conditions.⁹ For example, a former detainee at the CWCI said a sleeping dormitory of about 5m x 10-12m (50–60m²) was used to accommodate around 30 prisoners.¹⁰ According to another former prisoner, inmates typically had around 60cm in width while sleeping.¹¹ Bigger cells of about twice the size could be used to house as many as 170 prisoners.¹² Because bigger cells tended to be more overcrowded, inmates had to sleep right next to each other with no space

⁶ Between 2021 and 2024, FIDH interviewed 16 women who had been detained in the following five prisons (years of the interviews in parenthesis): 1) Central Women's Correctional Institution (CWCI) in Bangkok (2021; 2022; 2023); 2) Ratchaburi Central Prison in Ratchaburi Province (2022); 3) Thanyaburi Women's Correctional Institution for Drug Addicts in Pathumthani Province (2023); 4) Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution in Chiang Mai Province (2021; 2023; 2024); 5) Khae Noi Temporary Prison in Petchabun Province (2023); 6) Thonburi Women's Correctional Institution in Bangkok (2021); 7) DoC Hospital in Bangkok (2024); and 8) Trang Central Prison in Trang Province (2024).

⁷ DoC, *Report of the overcrowding situation in prisons/correctional facilities*, accessed on 13 May 2025; http://www.correct.go.th/rt103pdf/crowded_pdf.php?filename=2025_2025-05-05 [in Thai]

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ FIDH, *Thailand Annual Prison Report 2023*, 9 March 2023

¹⁰ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 29 November 2022

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 1 December 2022

between them.¹³ Some former inmates at the facility reported having to sleep on their sides or with their hands across their chests and not being able to move all night while sleeping.¹⁴

Torture and degrading treatment

Interviews with former prisoners revealed practices that could amount to ill treatment - such as verbal abuse - or torture - such as solitary confinement - and being forced to sit and roll under the sun.

For example, in 2021, a former prisoner detained at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution reported being placed in solitary confinement for five days and subjected to psychological abuse, neglect, and humiliation by prison guards.¹⁵ The use of solitary confinement was reported by other interviewed former prisoners at the same facility in 2024.¹⁶

Many former prisoners reported a pattern of degrading treatment by prison guards and officials and a submissive and authoritarian culture prevailing in correctional facilities for women. For example, former prisoners at the Thanyaburi Women's Correctional Institution for Drug Addicts and the CWCI described the constant display of submission to prison guards, such as sitting on the ground while interacting with them, as a practice that was intended to show respect for the authorities.¹⁷

In addition, transgender women were often held in the male section of the prisons and housed in the same cells with male inmates, where they were subjected to prison rules that failed to ensure gender sensitivity and respect gender diversity. For instance, A. P., a transgender woman detained at the Bangkok Remand Prison in 2023 who had already undergone breast surgery as part of their transition, was not provided with any underwear and wore the same thin-fabric uniforms as male prisoners.¹⁸ In another case, M., who had been undergoing hormone treatment, encountered difficulties in accessing hormone therapy while in detention.¹⁹

Prisons also failed to provide specific arrangements to ensure the safety and privacy of transgender women when showering.²⁰ Former male prisoners at Fang District Prison, Yala Central Prison, and Songkhla

¹³ *Ibid.*; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 29 November 2022

¹⁴ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 25 August 2021

¹⁵ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 22 September 2021

¹⁶ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 10 December 2024

¹⁷ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the Thanyaburi Women's Correctional Institution for Drug Addicts*, 8 November 2023; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 8 November 2023

¹⁸ TLHR, *Voice from 'Nara', a detainee in a gender-binary prison: short student haircut, no birth control pills, no bras*, 27 September 2023, <https://tlhr2014.com/archives/59992> [in Thai]

¹⁹ TLHR, *Maggie's struggle when she was sent from the Corrections Hospital back to Klong Prem Prison*, 14 May 2025, <https://tlhr2014.com/archives/75394> [in Thai]

²⁰ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at Fang District Prison*, 9 December 2024; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at the Bangkok Remand Prison*, 19 December 2024

Central Prison recalled transgender women wore clothes to cover their breasts when showering with other male inmates.²¹

Interviewed former male prisoners reported witnessing transgender women encountering a range of challenges, including mistreatment, discrimination, and harassment. Former prisoners at the Bangkok Remand Prison and Yala Central Prison recalled incidents in which transgender women were physically harassed by other prisoners.²²

According to the DoC, as of December 2024, there were 703 transgender inmates in prisons nationwide.²³

Inadequate sanitation conditions and gender-specific hygiene products

Persistently high number of prisoners and restrictions on access to water negatively affected the personal hygiene of female prisoners. Healthcare, including reproductive health, is a basic right guaranteed under Article 12(1) of the Convention.

Interviewed former prisoners reported that inmates did not have access to enough water when showering due to time constraints. For example, at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution, the water ran from the pipe in three short rounds – the first for washing, the second for rinsing off soap, and the third for face washing and teeth brushing.²⁴ A former prisoner at the CWCI reported that the prison used a bowl washing system, whereby prisoners were given eight bowls of water to bathe, which was insufficient for some inmates.²⁵ A former prisoner at the Thonburi Women's Correctional Institution said that inmates were typically given five bowls of water to bathe within 10 minutes.²⁶

Although former prisoners reported having access to menstrual hygiene products, the frequency and quantity of their supply were often insufficient. As a result, they had to buy them at the prison shop at higher prices than outside the prison, or receive them through visiting family members.²⁷ A former prisoner at Trang Central Prison received sanitary pads every two or three months.²⁸ Former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution reported they received around 20 pieces of sanitary pads per month and had to buy extra sanitary pads at the prison shop.²⁹

²¹ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at Fang District Prison*, 9 December 2024; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at Yala Central Prison*, 13 January 2025; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at Songkhla Central Prison*, 13 January 2025

²² FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at the Bangkok Remand Prison*, 19 December 2024; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at Yala Central Prison*, 13 January 2025

²³ DoC, *Correspondence number Yor Tor 0710.3/27: Prisoner statistics for the preparation of Annual Prison Report 2025*, 3 February 2025, [in Thai]

²⁴ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 22 September 2021

²⁵ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 25 August 2021

²⁶ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Thonburi Women's Correctional Institution*, 4 October 2021

²⁷ FIDH, *Thailand Annual Prison Report 2022*, 23 May 2023

²⁸ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Trang Central Prison*, 24 December 2024

²⁹ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 10 December 2024

A former prisoner at the CWCI reported that those who could not afford to buy sanitary pads from the prison shop were eligible to receive more pads only if they could prove to the prison officers that they really had no money or any support from their families. Nonetheless, according to the same former prisoner, the officers had the sole discretion to consider and decide whether a prisoner was eligible to receive more sanitary pads. Former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution said that only indigent prisoners could request free extra sanitary pads.³⁰

The shortage of sanitary pads seriously affected the personal hygiene of female prisoners and undermined their right to health. Some former prisoners reported witnessing fellow prisoners having to wash and reuse the same sanitary pad many times.³¹

Insufficient availability of/access to healthcare

Thai authorities have failed to provide adequate and timely physical and mental healthcare services to female prisoners.

Depending on the prison, the waiting time for inmates to see medical doctors could be very long due to the infrequency of the doctor's visits compared to the needs of the prison population. For instance, former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution reported the general practitioners visited the prison's healthcare facility once a week or once every two weeks.³²

In general, women prisoners tend to have greater psychological and healthcare needs than their male counterparts. Women admitted to prison are more likely to be affected by pre-existing health conditions, develop mental health issues, and suffer further trauma through their imprisonment. This is often the result of past physical, mental, or sexual abuse prior to their sentences.³³ However, the mental healthcare or psychiatric care services in most of the prisons where interviewed former prisoners were detained were either unavailable or seriously inadequate.

For instance, former prisoners at the CWCI and Ratchaburi Central Prison said that access to a psychiatrist or psychologist was possible through registration, though the process usually took a long time.³⁴ A former prisoner at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution reported that she did not receive any help after informing a prison guard about her depression and suicidal thoughts.³⁵

Interviews with former prisoners also found that mental health services in prisons were limited to the prescription of medication, rather than the promotion of the overall mental wellbeing of inmates. A former

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Thonburi Women's Correctional Institution*, 4 October 2021; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 22 September 2021

³² FIDH, *Interview with former prisoners at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 10 December 2024

³³ Thailand Institute of Justice, *Women's Pathways Into, Through and Out of Prison*, March 2021; pages 36-41

³⁴ FIDH, *Interview with a former prisoner at Ratchaburi Central Prison*, 18 November 2022; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the Central Women's Correctional Institution*, 1 December 2022

³⁵ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 22 September 2021

inmate at the CWCI reported that sedative pills were given to prisoners with sleeping or stress disorders.³⁶ A former prisoner at the Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution reported that 30-40 prisoners with mental disabilities were kept together in one sleeping dormitory and given the same daily medication to help sedate them or put them to sleep.³⁷

The limited availability of specialized medical treatment, such as gynecology, negatively affected pregnant women, including having to wait a long time to see a professional.³⁸ According to interviews with former prisoners at the CWCI, pregnant prisoners gave birth at outside hospitals and received postnatal care at the prison clinic.³⁹ In addition, there was a special dormitory for inmates with infants in the prison.⁴⁰

Access to appropriate medical treatment and medicine, including specialized medical services, was another primary challenge for female prisoners, especially pregnant women and those with chronic illnesses.⁴¹ Former prisoners consistently mentioned that paracetamol continued to be the most common medicine given to inmates to treat various illnesses.⁴² In some facilities, even paracetamol was not readily available, and the process to obtain it was slow. At the CWCI, one former prisoner reported having to register in the morning in order to be given a medicine in the evening on the same day.⁴³ Another former prisoner at the same facility reported that the distribution of paracetamol was so scarce that she had to cut the pill into pieces and share it with other prisoners.⁴⁴

For those with serious symptoms, the referral process to an outside hospital was overly complicated and tightly managed by prison staff. This resulted in the prison officers' failure to timely respond to cases of medical emergencies, especially at night.⁴⁵

The consequences of the inadequate response to medical emergencies in prisons was illustrated by the death of an imprisoned woman human rights defender, N. S. (aka B.), on 14 May 2024.⁴⁶ N. was reported to have suffered a cardiac arrest while in custody of the DoC on the morning of 14 May 2024. She had been detained at the CWCI in Bangkok since 26 January 2024, after the Bangkok South Criminal Court found her guilty of contempt of court and sentenced her to one month in prison in relation to a physical

³⁶ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 1 December 2022

³⁷ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at Chiang Mai Women's Correctional Institution*, 22 September 2021

³⁸ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 25 August 2021

³⁹ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 29 November 2022; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 1 December 2022

⁴⁰ The DoC allows children who are born in prison to live with their mother in prison until the children reach three years of age. In practice, children born in prison can stay with mother until they are one year old, after which they are removed and placed in the care of a family member or in alternative care. FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CCWCI*, 29 November 2022; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 1 December 2022

⁴¹ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at CWCI*, 23 November 2023; FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 25 August 2021

⁴² FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 8 November 2023

⁴³ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 29 November 2022

⁴⁴ TLHR, *Input for the Mandate of the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls for its Country Visit to Thailand from 2 to 13 December 2024*, 23 October 2024

⁴⁵ FIDH, *Interview with former prisoner at the CWCI*, 29 November 2022

⁴⁶ Netiporn was a prominent activist who advocated for LGBTIQ+ and youth rights in 2020-2021. Her political activism was met with repeated prosecutions since 2021, including two cases under Article 112 of Thailand's Criminal Code.

altercation with the court's security personnel on 19 October 2023. On 27 January 2024, N. commenced a dry hunger strike to demand judicial reform and the cessation of imprisonment of individuals for expressing dissenting opinions. Due to her deteriorating health, she was transferred to medical facilities several times. She resumed drinking water in February 2024 and eating in April 2024. Prior to her death, on 4 April 2024, she had been receiving treatment at the DoC Hospital in Bangkok for her deteriorating health as a result of the hunger strike.⁴⁷ To date, the Thai authorities have yet to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation to determine the causes and circumstances of her death.

Recommendations

- Increase the use of alternatives to incarceration by developing non-custodial measures within the legal system in line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules), including measures aimed at: the reduction of pre-trial or remand detention; alternatives to prison terms during sentencing; and post-sentencing alternatives that assist prisoners' reintegration into society.
- Abolish the death penalty for drug-related offenses, as a step towards the abolition of capital punishment for all crimes.
- Address and resolve the issue of overcrowding in prisons by finding sustainable and effective measures to reduce the prison population.
- Improve living conditions for women prisoners, in line with the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), by acknowledging the specific needs of women in prison and ensuring they have adequate medical care and facilities, especially in the case of pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and women with young children in prison.
- Provide adequate physical and mental healthcare, including reproductive healthcare, and health-related services, to female detainees within the framework of the CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 24.
- Ensure that female prisoners continue to be provided with the necessary items to meet their specific hygiene needs, particularly an adequate provision of sanitary pads that are of decent quality and free of charge.
- Ensure that transgender women in detention are treated with respect for their sexual orientation or gender identity and are protected from any abuse or harassment.
- Reinforce the human rights training of law enforcement officials and prison officers.

2. Women human rights defenders under attack

In its previous Concluding Observations in 2017, the CEDAW raised concerns over the situation of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and recommended the Thai government adopt and implement effective

⁴⁷ FIDH, *Thailand: Death in detention of pro-democracy activist Netiporn "Bung" Sanesangkhom*, 16 May 2024

measures for their protection.⁴⁸ However, since then, WHRDs in Thailand, including girls under the age of 18, have been subjected to increasing criminal prosecutions, attacks, violence, intimidation, threats, and other acts of harassment by both state and non-state actors for the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

Repressive laws and judicial harassment against WHRDs and protesters

Women and girls who played a key role in organizing and leading peaceful demonstrations as part of the pro-democracy and gender equality movements that began in 2020 were subjected to arrest, criminal prosecution, and detention in connection with their human rights work.⁴⁹

Thai authorities actively engaged in repeated attacks against WHRDs for their participation in the nationwide protests between 2020 and 2021 through the use of repressive laws and decrees that do not conform to international standards.⁵⁰ These included the Emergency Decree,⁵¹ the Computer Crimes Act, the Public Assembly Act, and Articles 112 (“lèse-majesté” or “royal defamation”)⁵² and 116 (“sedition”) of Thailand’s Criminal Code.⁵³

In 2020, FIDH documented the prosecution of 11 WHRDs, including one under the age of 18, in relation to their participation in the protests under various laws and decrees.⁵⁴ Four of them had a total of 10 or more cases brought against them. One of them, P. S., faces eight charges of lèse-majesté, and could be sentenced to a total of 120 years in prison.

Some of these WHRDs have already been convicted and sentenced to prison terms. For example, in January 2024, the Bangkok South Criminal Court sentenced P. T., a pro-democracy activist and protest leader, to two years in prison under Article 112 for a speech she gave at a demonstration in March 2021.⁵⁵ Her sentence was suspended for three years.

⁴⁸ UN CEDAW, *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Thailand*, July 24, 2017; UN Doc. CEDAW/C/THA/CO/6-7

⁴⁹ FIDH, *Standing tall - Women human rights defenders at the forefront of Thailand’s pro-democracy protests*, 3 February 2021

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ On 25 March 2020, the government declared a State of Emergency pursuant to Article 5 of the 2005 Emergency Decree in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19. Under Article 18, violations of the Emergency Decree carry penalties of up to two years’ imprisonment or a fine of up to 40,000 Baht (US\$1,225). It was renewed numerous times, with the last extension valid until 30 September 2022.

⁵² Article 112 prescribes jail terms of three to 15 years for those found guilty of defaming, insulting, or threatening the King, the Queen, the Heir to the throne, or the Regent.

⁵³ Article 116 prescribes jail terms of up to seven years for individuals found guilty of expressing an “opinion or criticism in order: (a) to bring about a change in the laws or the government by the use of coercion or violence, (b) to create confusion or disaffection among the people to the point of causing unrest in the kingdom, or (c) to have people violate the law.”; FIDH, *Standing tall - Women human rights defenders at the forefront of Thailand’s pro-democracy protests*, 3 February 2021

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Thai PBS, *The court sentenced “Mind Pasaravalee” to 2 years in prison for a protest speech, in violation of Article 112, with a three-year suspended sentence*, 31 January 2024, <https://www.thaipbs.or.th/news/content/336525> [in Thai]

In May 2024, the Thanyaburi Provincial Court sentenced C. J., a prominent pro-democracy activist and currently a Member of Parliament from the People's Party, to three years in prison under Article 112 for a speech she gave during a peaceful demonstration in September 2021.⁵⁶ She has been granted temporary release on bail by the court pending appeal.

Other WHRDs have been prosecuted and convicted in connection with their human rights work.

For example, in October 2021, B. A., a student pro-democracy activist, was charged with violating Article 112 and the Emergency Decree in connection with a speech she gave at a protest in August 2021.⁵⁷ In October 2023, the Bangkok South Criminal Court sentenced her to two years and eight months in prison.⁵⁸ Her sentence was suspended for two years.

In February 2022, T. T., a student pro-democracy activist, was charged under Article 112 for conducting a public opinion poll about royal motorcades in central Bangkok earlier in the same month.⁵⁹ In March 2022, she was charged again under Article 112 in connection with a live Facebook broadcast along the planned route of a royal motorcade in Bangkok.⁶⁰

Between July 2020 and May 2025, at least 1,975 individuals, including 473 women and girls (23.9%) were prosecuted in relation to their exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.⁶¹ Many of them have been repeatedly denied bail by the courts and held in lengthy pre-trial detention.⁶² As of May 2025, at least six women remained detained, all under Article 112, with one serving a prison sentence.⁶³

The political prosecution of women could lead to a profound impact on them and their families. Female political prisoners who remain incarcerated reported experiencing significant mental health challenges, including severe depression, suicidal thoughts, and acute anxiety disorders.⁶⁴ In addition to the harsh prison conditions contributing to this distress, the majority of these women were primary caregivers prior to their detention. Their separation from their children has not only worsened their mental health, but

⁵⁶ FIDH, *Thailand: Pro-Democracy activist and MP Chonthicha Jangrew sentenced to two years in prison*, 3 June 2024

⁵⁷ FIDH, *Thailand: Arbitrary detention of pro-democracy activist Benja Apan*, 12 October 2021

⁵⁸ TLHR, *"Benja" sentenced to four years in prison, later reduced to two years and eight months, with a suspended sentence, under Article 112 - Emergency Decree, for mentioning the name of King Rama X in a speech criticizing the government in front of the Sino-Thai building*, 30 October 2023, <https://tlhr2014.com/archives/61065> [in Thai]

⁵⁹ FIDH, *Thailand: Arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of Tantawan Tuatulanon*, 22 April 2022

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ TLHR, *Input for the Mandate of the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls for its Country Visit to Thailand from 2 to 13 December 2024*, 23 October 2024

⁶² FIDH, *Thailand: Arbitrary detention of pro-democracy youth activists and threats against TLHR*, 20 February 2024; FIDH, *Thailand: Arbitrary detention of two pro-democracy activists*, 13 January 2023; FIDH, *Thailand: Deteriorating health and arbitrary detention of two pro-democracy activists*, 7 July 2022

⁶³ TLHR, *List of political prisoners 2025*, 13 January 2025, <https://tlhr2014.com/archives/72122> [in Thai]

⁶⁴ Information obtained from TLHR, 13 May 2025

has also led to serious child protection concerns, as their children have been left without adequate care and support.⁶⁵

The government's retaliation against the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly resulted in fear and a chilling effect among activists and protesters. Between July 2020 and May 2025, at least 41 of them, including 10 women, fled Thailand to seek asylum abroad.⁶⁶ Four of the 22 WHRDs interviewed by FIDH in 2020 have fled Thailand to avoid criminal prosecution and almost certain jail sentences.⁶⁷ These include school student activists B. N. and S. C., who had been charged under Article 112 and fled Thailand in August 2022.⁶⁸

Other types of violations

During the pro-democracy movement of 2020, WHRDs and protesters repeatedly came under attack in the form of surveillance and intimidation, both while carrying out their work and in their private lives.⁶⁹ Thai authorities visited residences and schools to monitor their activities and intimidate them as well as their families.

WHRDs also faced gender-specific human rights violations, mostly taking the form of verbal abuse and harassment that were directly aimed at them simply because of their gender and gender expression.⁷⁰ This often overlapped with their experience of online attacks and harassment by non-state actors aimed at delegitimizing the work and credibility of WHRDs and discouraging them from participating in the demonstrations. Many of these instances were sexual or personal in nature and often had harsh emotional or psychological effects on the victims.

SLAPP lawsuits

WHRDs have continued to be targets of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) by both state and non-state actors.

For example, between 2016 and 2020, the Thai poultry company Thammakaset filed criminal defamation complaints against seven WHRDs, including NGOs workers, a human rights expert, an academic, and a

⁶⁵ TLHR, *"I want to blow out birthday candles with my son again": Talking to "Thanaporn", a young mother and defendant of Article 112, on the day the Supreme Court's verdict is due to be delivered*, 23 May 2024, <https://tlhr2014.com/archives/67106> [in Thai]

⁶⁶ Prachatai, *Four years on, young Thai activists are going into exile*, 10 January 2025

⁶⁷ Information obtained from TLHR, 14 May 2025

⁶⁸ Prachatai, *Life of 'Ploy', the youngest political refugee*, 8 October 2024, <https://prachatai.com/journal/2024/10/110988> [in Thai]

⁶⁹ FIDH, *Standing tall - Women human rights defenders at the forefront of Thailand's pro-democracy protests*, 3 February 2021

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

journalist.⁷¹ Despite being eventually acquitted in 2023, they suffered psychologically and financially as a result of years of protracted legal proceedings and the costs of their legal defense.⁷²

In May 2022, the head of a sub-district municipality in Nakhon Ratchasima Province filed a criminal defamation lawsuit against C. S., an investigative journalist and community rights and anti-corruption advocate, after she denounced the local official's alleged involvement in misappropriation and other irregularities in microcredit monies loaned by the National Village and Urban Community Fund (Village Fund) through the state-owned Government Savings Bank in three Facebook posts in February and April 2022.⁷³ In March 2024, the Nakhon Ratchasima Provincial Court dismissed the defamation charges against her.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, she is facing one more criminal defamation in connection with four other Facebook posts published in June 2023.⁷⁵

Recommendations

- End all legal proceedings against pro-democracy activists and participants in peaceful pro-democracy protests by withdrawing the charges against them under various laws.
- Put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against all pro-democracy activists and participants in peaceful pro-democracy protests, and ensure that they are able to exercise their legitimate rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly without any hindrance or fear of reprisals.
- Ensure the protection of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) from attacks, violence, intimidation, threats, and other acts of harassment, perpetrated by both state and non-state actors, including online, and to hold the responsible accountable.
- Adopt measures that ensure the effective protection of WHRDs against judicial harassment, particularly through the use of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP).
- Ensure that state officials are adequately trained in non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive treatment of WHRDs.

3. Women lag in political participation

3.1. Women underrepresented in public office

The Thai government has failed to implement the CEDAW's recommendation with regard to the implementation of temporary special measures to accelerate the substantive equality between men and women, particularly in decision-making bodies. In addition, female politicians in Thailand have been frequently subjected to gender-based attacks and harassment, particularly online.⁷⁶

⁷¹ FIDH, *Thailand: Thammakaset watch*, 16 January 2023

⁷² AFP, *Thai activists acquitted of libel, decry 'judicial harassment'*, 29 August 2023

⁷³ FIDH, *Thailand: Judicial harassment against community rights and anti-corruption activist Chutima Sidasathian*, 1 March 2024

⁷⁴ Bangkok Post, *Journalist prevails in another 'Slapp' case*, 6 March 2024

⁷⁵ Clooney Foundation for Justice, *Solving SLAPPs: Identifying and addressing gaps in Thailand's anti-SLAPP framework*, September 2024

⁷⁶ Nation, *'We have to try harder than the men' – women politicians struggle for parity*, 16 March 2024

The 2017 Constitution fails to prescribe a formal quota requirement for the presence of women in decision-making positions, and no amendments have been made to promote gender parity. Although the 2017 Organic Act on Political Parties encourages gender balance and allows the Election Commission (EC) to set minimum gender ratios in the nomination of party-list candidates,⁷⁷ such measures were not implemented to promote the nomination of female candidates in the 2019 and 2023 general elections. As a result, women have remained significantly under-represented in political life, including in the House of Representatives and in government positions.

Since the previous CEDAW review in 2017, Thailand has held two general elections, on 24 March 2019 and 14 May 2023. Both elections were dominated by men, with the percentage of female candidates for seats in the House of Representatives standing at 22.3% and 18.9%, respectively.⁷⁸

The March 2019 election allowed General Prayuth Chan-ocha, former leader of a military junta, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), which overthrew a democratically elected government led by a female prime minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, in a coup d'état on 22 May 2014, to remain prime minister.⁷⁹

Following the 2019 election, women comprised only 15% (76 out of 500) of the House of Representatives,⁸⁰ 10% (26 out of 250) of the Senate,⁸¹ and 8% (three out of 36) of Mr. Prayuth's cabinet.⁸²

Following the May 2023 election, the proportion of seats held by women in the House of Representatives increased slightly to 19% (96 out of 500),⁸³ while that of female Senators rose to 23% (45 out of 200).⁸⁴ According to the latest statistics by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, published in March 2025, the proportion of women in the Thai Parliament remained below the global average of

⁷⁷ Election Commission, *Statistical information on the election of members of the House of Representatives 2019*, 10 September 2019, https://www.ect.go.th/web-upload/migrate/download/article/article_20201002121233.pdf [in Thai]

⁷⁸ Election Commission, *Statistical information on the election of members of the House of Representatives 2019*, 10 September 2019, https://www.ect.go.th/web-upload/migrate/download/article/article_20201002121233.pdf [in Thai]

⁷⁹ FIDH, *Standing tall - Women human rights defenders at the forefront of Thailand's pro-democracy protests*, 3 February 2021

⁸⁰ Today, *Election 62: Thai female MPs win 76 seats, accounting for 14%, lower than the world average*, 26 May 19, <https://workpointtoday.com/women-in-thai-parliament/> [in Thai]

⁸¹ Gazette, *Announcement of the appointment of senators*, 14 May 2019, https://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/DATA/PDF/2562/E/121/T_0001.PDF?fbclid=IwY2xjawKP-Y1leHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETfYdEk5SXJTt09TdDjrMTVCAR7134tseBytcjSR0DX8YbPPIIgmnfVY_pxLJ2xsUoohKKGkoSOv4tSdyZcb3Kg_aem_zGSCBNWtQvU61WTIKC1dMg [in Thai]

⁸² BBC, *Prayut 2/1: The cabinet has been approved*, 10 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-48891690> [in Thai]

⁸³ Election Commission, *Statistical information on members of the House of Representatives 2023*, 25 September 2023, https://www.ect.go.th/web-upload/1xff0d34e409a13ef56eea54c52a291126/m_document/2028/21360/file_download/bed084d15e44d121196b713d93506bb8.pdf [in Thai]

⁸⁴ Gazette, *Announcement of the Election Commission on the result of the Senate election*, 10 July 2024, https://www.ect.go.th/mini/web-upload/51x532d85b7c5afeb48926086efa8fa29d6/202407/m_news/10395/44754/file_download/8283dc99521e8be73ca957c57e0a52a9.pdf [in Thai]

27.2%.⁸⁵ The number of women in the cabinet in the administration of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin of the Pheu Thai Party increased to 15% (five out of 34).⁸⁶

In August 2024, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin was removed from office as a result of a Constitutional Court ruling.⁸⁷ Subsequently in the same month, Paetongtarn Shinawatra was elected as Thailand's new prime minister, becoming the second female prime minister in Thailand's history after her aunt, Ms. Yingluck.⁸⁸ Despite some progress, Prime Minister Paetongtarn's premiership has so far fallen short of significantly advancing women's political representation and achieving gender parity in national politics. Currently, 23% (seven out of 35) cabinet members under her administration are women.⁸⁹

At the local level, as of December 2024, only 7.1% of the heads of Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAOs)⁹⁰ were women.⁹¹ The lack of female representation in local politics has been attributed to the traditional gender norms and insufficient opportunities for women in education and the economy.⁹²

3.2. Women excluded from line of succession

The Thai law of succession appears to be in breach of Article 1 of the Convention because it excludes women from ascending the throne.

The Palace Law of Succession, enacted in 1924, set the rules of succession to the throne that follows the primogeniture principle.⁹³ Nonetheless, Article 12 of the Law prohibits female members of the royal family from the line of succession. Under Article 5, the reigning monarch has the sole discretion to name the heir apparent.

The only possibility for a woman to ascend the throne is in the case the throne becomes vacant, and the King has not appointed an heir under the Palace Law of Succession. In such eventuality, under Article 21 of Thailand's 2017 Constitution, the successor designated by the Privy Council may be a "Princess," who could ascend the throne subject to Parliament's approval.

⁸⁵ UN Women, *Women in politics: 2025*, 11 March 2025

⁸⁶ Gazette, *Announcement on the appointment of ministers*, 2 September 2023, <https://ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/documents/140D214S00000000000100.pdf> [in Thai]

⁸⁷ Bangkok Post, *Srettha dismissed as PM after court ruling*, 14 August 2024

⁸⁸ CNN, *Paetongtarn Shinawatra to become Thailand's youngest prime minister in new political shake-up*, 16 August 2024

⁸⁹ Gazette, *Announcement on the appointment of ministers*, 4 September 2024, <https://ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/documents/42578.pdf> [in Thai]

⁹⁰ The PAO is a form of local government responsible for managing public services at the provincial level. PAO members are directly elected and hold a term of four years.

⁹¹ UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, *End of mission statement Official visit to Thailand (2-13 December 2024)*, 13 December 2024

⁹² Prachatai, *Women leaders remain scarce in Thai local politics. What is to be done?*, 7 June 2024

⁹³ Gazette, *Palace Law of Succession B.E. 2467 (1924)*, 12 November 1924, <https://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/DATA/PDF/2467/A/195.PDF> [in Thai]

Recommendations

- Introduce temporary special measures, such as statutory quotas, in accordance with Article 4(1) of the Convention and the CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 25 (2004), to accelerate the realization of women's substantive equality with men in all areas, particularly women's participation in decision-making bodies.
- Adopt comprehensive measures to ensure greater gender equality, including by combating discriminatory legislation and practices and providing adequate resources and capacity building aimed at advancing women's representation in decision-making at all levels and in all sectors.
- Address the norms, practices, and traditions that reinforce patriarchal attitudes, gender stereotypes, and discrimination against women.
- Amend the Palace Law of Succession to guarantee equality of women and men in the succession to the throne.