

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

10 JUNE 2009

IMMEDIATE

P
R
E
S
S

R
E
L
E
A
S
E

THAILAND: ICJ Condemns Killing of at least 10 Worshipers in the Alfurquan Mosque

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) strongly condemns the indiscriminate killing of worshipers during evening prayers on June 8th at the Alfurquan Mosque in Ai Payae Village, Narathiwat Province. The ICJ expresses its condolences to the relatives and families of the victims.

According to an eye-witness account, five to six masked assailants dressed in black opened fire with M-16 assault rifles and shotguns directly into a crowd of worshipers as they were bending down in prayer. Ten people died at the scene, including the Imam. At least another 12 people were seriously injured. The identity and affiliation of the perpetrators are unknown. Witnesses estimate that it took approximately half an hour for medical assistance to arrive.

The ICJ is concerned that the indiscriminate mass shooting in the mosque represents a departure from the smaller scale and more targeted killings normally seen in the context of the insurgency, and may indicate an intensification of the cycle of violence that has plagued the region.

"The scale, method and target of this attack – in effect a massacre of Muslims by unknown and heavily armed assailants aimed at inflicting a large number of casualties – marks a dangerous escalation of violence in the Deep South," said Roger Normand, ICJ's Asia-Pacific Director. "To restore public confidence, especially among Malay Muslim citizens in the South, the Government needs to urgently review its policies and take concrete steps to promote peace and reconciliation. Strengthening the justice system and the rule of law should be a top priority."

In the past five years, over 3,400 people have been killed due to violence in the Deep South. There has been an upsurge in violence since the beginning of this year. A string of bomb attacks and shootings in the last two weeks has left over 20 dead, including two schoolteachers, one of whom was eight-months pregnant, a Pattani Tambon chief, a school security guard, and several villagers.

These violent attacks that are occurring on an almost daily basis in the Deep South constitute serious crimes under national law and violate established international legal standards. The ICJ calls upon the Thai authorities to conduct swift, impartial and independent investigations with the result of bringing the perpetrators to justice. Community leaders and families of the victims should be kept informed of the progress of any investigation.

The Government of Prime Minister Abhisit has pledged to promote peace and reconciliation based on prioritizing civilian-led initiatives and the rule of law in the Deep South. Popular anger at the military-led response to the insurgency is one of the key factors fuelling the violence and undermining the trust of local communities in Government policies. The attack at the Alfurquan Mosque, and the overall escalation in violence since the beginning of the year, underscore the need to strengthen the civilian justice system as a key pillar of resolving the conflict.

For further information, please contact:

Roger Normand, ICJ Asia-Pacific Director, +66 84 524 1133

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

10/1 Soi Ari 2, Phahonyothin Road, Samsennai, Phayathai, Bangkok 10400
Tel: 02 6198477, 02 619 8478 – Fax: 02 6198479 – Website: <http://www.icj.org> - E-mail: info@icj.org