

16 August 2016

## **Thailand – Health deterioration of human rights defender Jatupat Boonpattaraksa after 9 days of hunger strike**

On 15 August 2016, it was reported that following 9 days of a hunger strike to protest his arrest, human rights defender **Jatupat Boonpattaraksa** became semi-conscious with a fever in Phu Khiao District Prison. Jatupat Boonpattaraksa, along with his colleague **Wasin Prommanee** were arrested on 6 August 2016 for violating the Constitutional Referendum Act while campaigning against the draft of a new constitution in Thailand.

[Jatupat Boonpattaraksa](#) is a human rights defender and leader of a student activist group called ‘Dao Din’ based in Khon Kaen University in the north-eastern province of Khon Kaen. The group advocates for community rights, social justice and democracy. He is also a member of New Democracy Movement (NDM) along with [Wasin Prommanee](#), which fights against military dictatorship in Thailand, which has been in place since the coup d’etat in May 2014.

On 15 August 2016, lecturers from Naresuan University and activists from Dao Din, visited Jatupat Boonpattaraksa and reported that the human rights defender was semi-conscious and had a fever following a hunger strike which he began on 7 August 2016 protesting against his arrest.

On 6 August 2016, one day ahead of a national referendum in Thailand on the new draft constitution, police from the Phu Khiao police station arrested Jatupat Boonpattaraksa and Wasin Prommanee while they were distributing leaflets, fliers and documents with information about the new draft constitution and the increased military control it could bring. The human rights defenders were charged under Article 61 of the Constitutional Referendum Act of “publishing or distributing content about the draft constitution that deviates from the facts, contains rude and violent language, or threateningly discourages voters from participating in the referendum”. They are also accused of violating a government order by refusing to provide fingerprints while in police custody. If convicted, they could face up to 10 years imprisonment, a fine of up to 200,000 THB (€5,160) and loss of electoral rights for five years.

On 8 August 2016, the human rights defenders were brought before the Phu Khiao Court. Wasin Prommanee was released on bail after paying 150,000 THB (€3,870), he is due in court on 22 August 2016. Jatupat Boonpattaraksa claimed his innocence and refused to be released on bail. He is scheduled to appear in court on 19 August 2016.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about human rights defender Jatupat Boonpattaraksa’s health and the judicial harassment of him and of Wasin Prommanee, which it believes to be directly linked to their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

## Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Thailand to:

1. Immediately release **Jatupat Boonpattaraksa**, and withdraw the legal action against him and **Wasin Prommanee**, including dropping all charges against them, as it is believed that it is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Thailand** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.