

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Thailand: Death of demonstrators must be fully investigated**

Amnesty International has called on the Thai government to impartially investigate the death of at least 84 demonstrators in the south of Thailand.

Authorities today announced that 78 demonstrators died of suffocation after being taken into custody. They have reportedly acknowledged that at least an additional six died of gunshot wounds sustained during the demonstration.

"Allegations that authorities may have used excessive force in suppressing this demonstration must be immediately investigated. All deaths related to this incident, including that of at least 78 persons, who reportedly suffocated after being transported in inhumane conditions after arrest, must be promptly, effectively and independently investigated. Those suspected of responsibility should be suspended from duty pending the result of legal proceedings, and brought to justice," said Natalie Hill, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia Director.

An estimated 3,000 persons had demonstrated on 25 October 2004 outside a police station in Narathiwat Province, where relatives had gathered to call for the release of village defence volunteers detained under suspicion of handing arms to militants. Demonstrators reportedly threw stones and attempted to storm the police station in Tak Bai district.

While acknowledging the necessity for security forces to defend themselves if attacked, Amnesty International urges Thai authorities to ensure that security forces use force only when strictly necessary, that it is used in proportion to the seriousness of the threat, and with full respect for the preservation of human life, in accordance with the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

The organization also called on authorities to grant the reported 1,300 persons taken into custody after the incident under martial law immediate access to lawyers, relatives and medical care, and to ensure that they are not subjected to any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Amnesty International also renews calls to the authorities to independently investigate other allegations of the excessive use of force in suppressing violent unrest in the country's four southernmost provinces, and to prosecute suspected perpetrators. This includes events of 28 April 2004, when over one hundred persons suspected of attacking police posts were killed by security forces.

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