

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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(New York) The [Thai](#) authorities should promptly and impartially investigate the alleged police torture of two pro-democracy activists in Bangkok and hold those responsible to account, Human Rights Watch said today.

On October 29, 2021, at about 6 p.m., police arrested Attasith Nussa, 35, and Weeraphap Wongsaman, 18, after violently dispersing a protest outside Bangkok's Din Daeng police station. The two men allege that the police beat them while arresting them and then took them inside the police station, where officers beat and choked them, burned them with cigarettes, and threatened them with death.

Attasith and Weeraphap's accounts of their brutal mistreatment show that the Thai government has failed miserably to live up to its repeated pledges to end torture in police custody, said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director at Human Rights Watch. The fact that this abuse happened not in a remote provincial jail but in downtown Bangkok demonstrates how little the police fear getting punished.

On November 1 Attasith told the [media](#) that he was filing a complaint with the House of Representatives Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. He said that, after being taken to the police station, officers in uniforms and civilian clothes surrounded him in an interrogation room. One police officer in a white shirt accused him of setting fire to a shrine in front of the Din Daeng police station, and said it was convenient that he came alone to the demonstration so that they could say he died in an accident.

[H]e dragged me on a wooden bench and slammed my head against it twice Attasith said. He asked me, Why did you come here and make a mess? Did you set fire to the shrine? Do you know who shot that riot police officer [who was seriously wounded on October 6]? Were you involved in that shooting? He asked these questions again and again. Then he hit my ribs and stomach with a wooden baton. After that, he grabbed my neck and choked me until I almost passed out.

Attasith said the police took turns choking him six or seven times, forcing him to tell them his mobile phone and chat passwords. Officers told him not to resist or the beating would get much worse. They beat him until 7 p.m. and kept him in the interrogation room until about 3 a.m. the next day, before taking him to the holding cells where they detained other protesters.

On October 30 Weeraphap gave a media [interview](#) describing his mistreatment by police in uniforms and civilian clothes at the Din Daeng police station.

Those police officers punched and kicked me when they arrested me and brought me inside the Din Daeng police station, Weeraphap said. I was handcuffed behind my back. They put me on a chair in an interrogation room and took my pants off. They burned the areas around my genitals with cigarettes and kicked my testicles. One of the officers said, You were lucky that I did not shoot you and dump your body in a river, because you set fire to the shrine [in front of the police station]. They took turns beating me up, punching and kicking me.

Weeraphap said they repeatedly asked him about the wounding of the riot police officer on October 6, and when he said he knew nothing about it, they beat him again. He said this went on until the next day at 3 a.m.

Attasith and Weeraphap were released by the court on October 30.

Torture and other ill-treatment in police custody have long been a problem in Thailand but the government has taken few steps to address it, Human Rights Watch said. In August, police [tortured a drug suspect to death](#) in the Nakhon Sawan provincial police station. Human Rights Watch has also documented [numerous cases related to counterinsurgency operations in Thailand's southern border provinces](#), in which police and military personnel tortured ethnic Malay Muslims.

The governments [Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Bill](#), which is currently being considered by parliament, does not [meet international human rights standards](#), such as lacking definitions for cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Thailand is a party to the United Nations [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#), which obligates governments to investigate and prosecute acts of torture and other ill-treatment. Article 4 of the Convention states that a government should ensure that all acts of torture are offenses under its criminal law. The same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture. The government should also make these offenses punishable by appropriate penalties, which take into account their grave nature.

Attasith and Weeraphaps cases should impress upon the Thai government the need to establish a credible and independent prosecutorial body to receive complaints of police abuse, conduct investigations, and bring cases for prosecution, Adams said. The government should also promptly act to fulfill past pledges to make torture a criminal offense.

Criminalization of Peaceful Expression in Thailand

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