

UN rights office disappointed with Thai Government's refusal to criminalize enforced disappearance

28 February 2017 – The United Nations human rights office today urged the Government of Thailand to criminalize enforced or voluntary disappearance and torture.

The announcement follows news last week that National Legislative Assembly – the military-appointed parliament – decided not to enact a bill that would have done just that.

“The Assembly’s decision to reject the bill is very concerning given the continued allegations of torture and disappearances in Thailand, and it is deeply worrying that such actions may now continue without any legal redress,” Ravina Shamdasani told journalists in Geneva.

Ms. Shamdasani, the spokesperson for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), characterized the decision to not enact the bill as “a devastating blow” to the families of those who have disappeared.

Since 1980, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Voluntary Disappearances recorded 82 cases of enforced disappearances in the country.

Those include the disappearances of respected lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit in 2004 and Karen human rights activist Pholachi “Billy” Rakchongcharoen in 2014.

Speaking to the press, Ms. Shamdasani also raised concern about the increasing number of criminal cases brought against human rights defenders in Thailand for reporting allegations of torture and ill-treatment.