

31 May 2017

### **Thailand: House of Maitree Chamroensuksakul raided as part of ongoing harassment**

On 29 May 2017, the house of human rights defender **Maitree Chamroensuksakul** was raided by police while he was returning from a meeting with the U.N. Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, during an unofficial visit to Bangkok on 26 and 27 May 2017. The raid took place in the village of [Chaiyaphum Pasae](#), a Lahu human rights defender who was shot dead by military officials earlier this year, during an alleged anti-drug operation in Ban Kong Phak Ping, in the Chiang Dao district of Thailand's northern Chiang Mai province. Maitree Chamroensuksakul was a mentor of Chaiyaphum Pasae's and a primary witness in his murder. On the same day, the defender's sister-in-law, Nawa Ja-ue, and the cousin of Chaiyaphum Pasae, Chanthana Pasae, were arrested and accused of handing drugs to Chaiyaphum Pasae on the day he was killed.

[Maitree Chamroensuksakul](#) is an ethnic Lahu human rights defender, citizen journalist and a member of the Rak Lahu Group, which works on documenting human rights violations against indigenous peoples and on their empowerment. He is seeking justice for the killing of Chaiyaphum Pasae, a 17-year-old ethnic Lahu human rights defender and an advocate for the rights of vulnerable ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand. Maitree Chamroensuksakul reported receiving a death threat and several other intimidations after Chaiyaphum Pasae was [killed](#) by the military during a checkpoint control on 17 March 2017.

On 29 May 2017, policemen and officers from the Narcotics Suppression Bureau raided the home of Maitree Chamroensuksakul in Ban Kong Phak Ping, Chiang Dao district during what the authorities claimed was a joint operation to search for drugs. The raid took place while Maitree Chamroensuksakul was returning home from a meeting in the capital with Michel Forst, the United Nations Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. His sister-in-law, Nawa Ja-ue, was arrested as well as a cousin of Chaiyaphum Pasae, Chanthana Pasae. The raid was reportedly led by the same regional police commander who told the media after Chaiyaphum Pasae was murdered that he had been living lavishly through money gained from drug trafficking.

On 17 March 2017, Chaiyaphum Pasae was shot dead by military officials who were attempting to arrest him as an alleged drug suspect. He and a friend were driving to Chiang Mai City when soldiers stopped their car at a checkpoint and arrested them for alleged drug possession. Officials claim Chaiyaphum Pasae resisted arrest and was subsequently shot in "an act of self-defence".

After the killing, soldiers and military officials visited Ban Kong Phak Ping on several occasions, while some members of the defender's community were summoned by the authorities. On 23 March 2017, Maitree Chamroensuksakul was threatened with bullets laid in front of his bathroom. Unidentified persons travelled to his house on several occasions to take pictures. During the night of 16 May 2017, while preparations were being made to commemorate "60 days after the death of Chaiyaphum Pasae", two plainclothes military officials were stationed in front of Maitree Chamroensuksakul's home. Memorial events linked to Chaiyaphum Pasae's death in the community have been held under heavy surveillance.

Human rights defenders operating in Northern Thailand, particularly those working on minority rights,

regularly report threats and harassment from the military. Anti-drug operations have been used by abusive officials to disguise their attacks on defenders who have exposed official wrongdoing or protected minority rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Thailand to immediately release Nawa Ja-ue and Chanthana Pasae and to cease all further harassment against Maitree Chamroensuksakul and those who call for justice for the death of Chaiyaphum Pasae.

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

1. Immediately cease all further harassment of **Maitree Chamroensuksakul** and his family, as Front Line believes that the raid carried out at his home was solely as a result of his legitimate work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Nawa Ja-ue and Chanthana Pasae, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being held solely as a result of their family ties with human rights defenders Maitree Chamroensuksakul and Chaiyaphum Pasae;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Maitree Chamroensuksakul, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Maitree Chamroensuksakul, as well as of the members of his family;
5. 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.