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A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L
A S S O C I A T I O N

His Excellency
Samak Sundaravej
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Your Excellency:

As the president of the 11,000 members of the American Anthropological Association, I write to express my concern about human rights in the context of the recently-reinstated war on drugs in Thailand.

We certainly appreciate the urgent problems that drugs can create in any society. However, the global fight against HIV/AIDS has taught us that rather than being subjected to indiscriminate suppression, people who use drugs must be supported to be actively and meaningfully involved in leading harm reduction work. Comprehensive harm reduction services that are integrated into existing health and social policies and programs have proven more effective than military-style compulsory drug "treatment."

In addition, we are gravely concerned about the high number of extrajudicial executions that previously occurred in the course of the drug war, and which remain unaddressed. According to credible reports by human rights organizations, and a government investigation into the 2003 war on drugs, 2,819 people were killed in 2,559 murder cases between February and April in 2003. Of those killed, more than half reportedly had no relation to drug dealing. We understand that as yet, no concrete action has been taken to redress these wrongs, to hold law enforcement officers accountable, or to prevent their recurrence in the future.

Wholesale repression in a new "war on drugs" can only again result in thousands of inappropriate arrests, deaths, and the disruption of HIV prevention and other services.

We urge you to encourage your government to work with civil society organizations, including people who use drugs, to develop a humane approach to the country's drug problem, for example through the promulgation of a national harm reduction policy. Drug suppression efforts should include full respect for due process of law and human rights standards for all involved.

We look forward to receiving information about the measures you are taking to protect these basic human rights while addressing the drug problem. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Setha Low".

Setha Low, Ph.D.
President
American Anthropological Association

Sara L.M. Davis, Ph.D.
Chair, Committee for Human Rights
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cc: Chalerm Yubamrung
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