

Death Penalty

Submitted by: The Advocates for Human Rights, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

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Summary: Thailand has made little progress toward abolishing the death penalty, despite commitments it made during its third UPR cycle. Courts continue to impose death sentences at a high rate; the number of people under sentence of death has more than doubled since 2022. Courts sentence people to death for drug-related offenses, which do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold. Drug-related death sentences disproportionately affect women. Prison overcrowding and poor detention conditions persist, including for people under sentence of death.

Thailand has made little progress toward abolition, despite commitments.

- In its third-cycle UPR, Thailand supported nine death penalty recommendations falling into three general categories: (1) take action toward abolition of the death penalty; (2) continue reviewing its use of the death penalty for all crimes; (3) strengthen public awareness-raising campaigns about the death penalty.
- Authorities stated that they would use a “phased approach” in implementing the objective of moving toward the abolition of the death penalty. Despite these commitments, Thailand has made little progress toward implementing any of the recommendations it supported in 2022.
- Thailand still prescribes the death penalty for dozens of offenses. Laws still authorize the death penalty for a wide array of crimes, including drug-related offenses. The Narcotics Act 2021 authorizes the death penalty for “serious drug offenses,” for example.
- In December 2024, the Thai cabinet rejected a proposal from the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand to abolish the death penalty. Government officials and politicians occasionally make public statements in support of the death penalty, asserting that it deters crime. In the lead-up to the February 2026 general election, several political parties expressed support for the death penalty for corruption.
- Thailand’s National Human Rights Plan for 2023-2027 included a commitment to move toward abolition of the death penalty for all crimes. This plan, however, has not resulted in concrete measures or a timeframe for full abolition.

Courts have stepped up death sentences, particularly for drug-related offenses.

- Between January 2022 and December 2025, lower courts imposed 608 death sentences. According to the Department of Corrections, 429 people were under sentence of death as of the end of 2025, up from 191 people in April 2022. Almost 73% of people under sentence of death had been convicted of a drug-related offense. That figure increased from 61% in April 2022.
- Thailand’s use of the death penalty for drug-related offenses disproportionately affects women. As of December 2025, 53 women were under sentence of death, and all but one had been convicted of a drug-related crime. In April 2022, just 22 women were under sentence of death for such crimes, out of a total of 25

women under sentence of death. By comparison, during the same time period between 58% and 69% of men under sentence of death had been convicted of drug-related crimes.

Detention conditions, including for people under sentence of death, violate international human rights standards.

- All three prisons where authorities primarily hold people under sentence of death are severely overcrowded. Occupancy rates range from 95% for Bang Kwang Central Prison to 123% for Songkhla Central Prison to 166% for the Central Women's Correctional Institution in Bangkok.
- Prison authorities often subject people in their custody to prolonged disciplinary segregation as well as weighted ankle shackles, handcuffs, and chains. Prisons have inadequate water supplies and do not provide women with sufficient menstrual products. Healthcare services are understaffed and lack sufficient equipment and supplies.
- Thai authorities have consistently refused to allow independent human rights organizations access to prisons, including prisons where people are under sentence of death.

Recommendations

- Abolish the death penalty for all crimes and replace it with penalties that are fair, proportionate, and consistent with international human rights standards.
- In the interim:
 - Reduce the number of offenses that prescribe the death penalty, prioritizing drug-related offenses;
 - Ensure that courts consider gender-specific defenses and mitigation, including any history of gender-based violence, coercive control relationships, and economic vulnerability;
 - On an annual basis, publish data about all persons sentenced to death, under sentence of death, and executed, disaggregated by sex or gender, crime of conviction, relationship to any codefendants or victims, age of any children under age 18, current location, and status of any appeals or requests for clemency;
 - Undertake an awareness-raising campaign about the death penalty, its impacts, and alternatives;
 - Declare an official moratorium on executions; and
 - Commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment.
- Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Take concrete measures to reduce prison overcrowding by finding sustainable and effective measures to reduce the prison population.
- Align detention conditions with the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules.
- Authorize non-governmental organizations to conduct visits to places of detention, interview people who are detained, and assess conditions without undue hindrance.