



Mr. Lertsak Kumkongsak

Brief information on Thai Human Rights Defender Affiliations: Ecological and Cultural Study Group, and advisor of Campaign for Public Policy on Mineral Resources (PPM) and leader of Commoner Party



Lertsak is an environmentalist and prominent human rights activist who have been pivotal to community-based campaigns against destructive mining in Thailand for more than 20 years. Currently he is coordinator of the Ecological and Cultural Study Group; the Campaign for Public Policy on Mineral Resources (PPM) and the “People’s anti-mining network of Thailand”. He was the first person to work with the Udon Thani Conservation Group (Udonthani province, Isaan region, northeastern Thailand) against a potash mining project which the group has now been fighting for more than 15 years.

Lertsak has invested his energy, knowledge and campaigning skills in many community-based Human Rights groups and the young HRD pro-democracy movement. He has worked closely to support the Khon Rak Ban Kerd (Loei province, Isaan) , other anti- potash mining in Isan and the Rak Ban Heang Group (Lampang province, North of Thailand). Mr. Lertsak received the prestigious Kumol Kimthong Award ‘Person of the Year’ on 22nd February 2015.

Since 2014, Lertsak has published and co-authored statements, analysis, and seminars, to speak of and defend legitimate rights and livelihoods of the people in the face of the military regime. November 2014, Mr. Lertsak signed his name to a courageous statement entitled, ‘No Reform under the Boot of the Military’¹, co-signed by 12 Isaan-based NGO’s and the first statement

denouncing the junta. In the statement, the activists stated that the 12 NGOs and rights activists based in northeastern Thailand refused to participate in the junta's reform because they love human rights, liberty, and democracy, but not the junta. They stated they are not supportive of the regime that has taken away power which rightfully belongs to the people.

Lertsak is an advisor of the Network of People Who Own Mineral Resources, who are the people of this country, and are directly affected from the mining operations in various parts of Thailand, They have been monitoring and holding the government and private sector accountable in implementing the policies.

Mr. Lertsak is a crucial figure linking university-based activism with rural community-based rights campaigns. He embodies the definition of grassroots being connected to many sectors in society.

Lertsak is well respected for his astute and careful analysis of policies, trends and political-economic changes emerging in Thailand under the military. He is a brilliant campaign strategist committed to the inclusion of all. Many communities and activists seek him out as a point of reference.

A major organizing success was the key role Lertsat and PPM played in the We Walk Campaign that mobilized communities, individuals and organizations to highlight the issues and build a strong wall of solidarity between different struggles. Lertsat and PPM's work makes it possible for many others such as lawyers' media and W/HRDs to do anti- mining work nationally.

It is imperative that Lertsak be able to continue his vital work for the future of Thailand free from the threat of violence.

Appx

Successful advocacy interventions and legal assistance

1. The revocation of mining license of the industrial sandstone quarry in Tambon Kham Pa Lai, Muang District, Mukdahan as it has been found that their application process for the mining license has not been conducted lawfully, and that the area being mined overlaps with preserved areas including watersheds used by the public where mining is prohibited in such area as per Mining Act 2017's Section 17/4.

2. Being able to revoke the mining license of the industrial limestone quarry in Tambon Pak Chaem, Huay Yod District, Trang as it was found that their application and the granting of the mining license was not in accordance with law. The mining area overlapped with preserved area including an ancient site older than 4,000 years as per the Mining Act 2017's Section 17/4.
3. The revocation of mining license of a quartz mine in Tambon Lao Hai Ngam, Kuchinarai District, Kalasin as it has been found that the process to apply for the mining license had not been conducted lawfully, and as such it was an illegal mining operation.
4. Administrative lawsuit launched by Environmental HRDs (EHRDs) in Bamnet Narong District, Chaiyaphum to revoke the Environmental Impact Assessment Report on a potash mining project and coal-fired power plant given that it was in violation of community rights and its application process lacked public participation. Campaigns have been launched in over the past four years to have the project suspended. Initially, the local villagers were successfully in putting pressure on the operators until they agreed to change the fuel from coal to biomass. The next goal is to have the potash mining project relocated from their communities.
5. The development of rehabilitation plan for gold mine in Loei Province by the people's sector: The group of HRDs known as Khon Rak Ban Kerd Group(KBRK), who live around the gold mines in Tambon Khao Luang, Wang Sa Phung District, Loei Province have been fighting for their community rights and the right to live in a good environment over the past 12 years. They have successfully campaigned for the shutting down of the gold mines and to have that area rehabilitated. An effort has been made to develop a rehabilitation plan of the gold mines and the areas around them which would also include the provision of remedies to those affected by the toxic pollution from the mining.

This rehabilitation plan involves nine aspects including

- (1) Reform of the legal and policy structure,
- (2) Immediate remedy to people whose health have been affected,
- (3) Rehabilitation of the area inside and outside the mining license area which have been polluted by the mines,
- (4) Restoration of nature and the environment including its biodiversity,
- (5) Restoration of the community economy and food security, along with the restoration of the environmental quality of the polluted area,
- (6) Restoration of the social and cultural relationships and resolution of conflicts and disputes,

(7) Restoration of human dignity and provision of restitution for any damages caused as a result of the previous violations related to the mining operation,

(8) Restoration of community rights and learning process for the management of natural resources and the environment, and

(9) Developing mechanisms to monitor and ensure ongoing rehabilitation.