

จดหมายถึง ปธน. โอบามา

เขียนโดย ศ.นพ.วิจารณ์ พานิช

วันอาทิตย์ที่ 19 มกราคม 2014 เวลา 00:00 น. - แก้ไขล่าสุด วันอาทิตย์ที่ 19 มกราคม 2014 เวลา 09:26 น.

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Letter to President Obama regarding Thailand's Political Crisis - A Response to Michael Turner

.17 มกราคม 2014 เวลา 18:21 น.President Barack Obama

President of the United States of America

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washing, D.C. 20500

17 January 2014

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing in response to Congressman Michael R. Turner's letter to you yesterday, urging you to publically voice opposition to the anti-government movement and support the election on 2 February 2014. With all due respect, Congressman Turner's letter is misguided and shows a lack of understanding of the Thai political crisis.

As a U.S. trained lawyer, and citizen of the U.S. and Thailand, I am pro-democracy. Indeed, I have often volunteered for voters' assistance groups to inform Americans on voting registration, necessary documents for voting, and finding the right precinct to ensure that their votes do get counted.

The movement is not to rid Thailand of democracy. It is to rid Thailand of the most tyrannical and dictatorial regime in history. Throughout history, many dictators have been democratically elected. Saddam Hussein received 100% of the votes. Hugo Chavez, whom you publically called authoritarian, was also elected by the majority.

The Thaksin authoritarian government, elected through vote-rigging, proved to be the most corrupt and the gravest human rights violator. In order to fully appreciate the current political crisis, one must examine the telecommunications Tycoon' legacy. To name a few examples of Thaksin's egregious conducts:

☐ In February 2003, Thaksin launched a "war on drugs" campaign resulting in 2,800 extrajudicial killing in the span of three months. In 2007, official investigations concluded that more than half of those executed had no connections with drugs. The UN Human Rights Committee raised serious concerns yet perpetrators were never prosecuted.

☐ In 2004, Thaksin's security forces shot, suffocated or crushed to death 85 southern protestors in what is known as the Tak Bai massacre. Human Rights Watch has condemned this atrocity and urged independent criminal investigation but again, to no avail.

☐ According to Amnesty International, 18 human rights defenders were either assassinated or disappeared.

☐ Due to Thaksin's censorship and intimidation of the press, human rights violations remained unreported and any dissent was silenced.

☐ In an attempt to circumvent conflict of interest laws, Thaksin illegally transferred billions of baht in assets to his maids and drivers, without their knowledge.

☐ Thaksin aided his wife to purchase government land at a reduced rate of 1/3 in violation of the law prohibiting political leaders from engaging in business dealings with the government. Thaksin was consequently sentenced to two years in prison but fled the country and

never served his sentence.

□Thaksin approved a US \$127 million low-interest government loan to Myanmar's military-run government to purchase satellite services from his telecommunications business.

□During his tenure as prime minister, Thaksin sold his stakes in telecoms giant Shin Corp to Temasek holding, evading taxes worth \$16.3 million.

□Thaksin's countless measures to benefit his telecommunications business prompted the Supreme Court to unanimously find him guilty of 4 counts of policy corruption and order seizure of \$1.4 billion of his frozen \$2.3-billion fortune.

These are just examples of the myriad ways in which Thaksin abused and robbed this country. Although in self-imposed exile, Thaksin continues to run Thailand and implement the policy of corruption through his sister. In a guised attempt to foster reconciliation, the current Thaksin regime passed the Amnesty Bill, designed to pardon protestors from all sides for engaging in political expression. At 4:25 am on a Friday night, the Thaksin-controlled parliament passed the final version of the bill that would now pardon all politicians ever charged or convicted of corruption since the coup. The revised bill also provided for the return of assets seized. To state the obvious, this law was passed solely to pave way for Thaksin's return as a free man with all his wealth restored.

In a ploy to control both the parliament and the senate, Thaksin's current government attempted to amend the senate structure and bar appointed senators who are professionals from all sectors. Eliminating this system would result in Thaksin's party controlling the legislative branch without any checks and balances. The Amnesty Bill or any other laws to enable Thaksin's corruption can then easily pass. Although the Constitutional Court struck down the senate-restructuring measure, Thaksin's government openly declared that it would defy the court's decision.

It is this blatant systematic policy of corruption and abuse of power solely for the benefit of Thaksin that fueled Thai citizens to stand up and say, enough is enough. The protestors want democracy. But first, Thaksin's dictatorship must be eradicated.

Over a decade of being under Thaksin's regime, one thing is clear. Our current democratic system has failed us. It has allowed for an authoritarian regime to usurp power and strip the nation's wealth. When a system accepts voter fraud and places corrupt politicians above the law, citizens must question and rise up against this broken system. The citizens are calling for reform. A true democracy with transparency, accountability, and most importantly, balance of power.

We want democracy. And it is through this civil obedience that we will achieve it.

Sincerely,

Vanina Sucharitkul

cc: Congressman Michael R. Turner