



## ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT FOUNDATION

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### **Thailand: Investigate Army Killing of Indigenous Lahu Youth Activist**

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*[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]*

(Chiang Mai) – Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) calls on the Thai authorities to effectively investigate into the killing of indigenous Lahu youth activist, Chaiyaphum Pasae, without any delay. Chaiyaphum, 17, was shot dead by an army soldier as alleged drug suspect on 17 March in northwest Chiang Mai Province.

According to official information, soldiers of Pha Muang Task Force deployed at a checkpoint in Chiang Dao district found 2,800 methamphetamine tablets in the car in which Chaiyaphum was travelling. As they were about to arrest him and the driver, Phongsanai Saengtala, 19, Chaiyaphum got out of the car and ran away. Three soldiers chased him, fired into the air first but then aimed at him as they saw him about to throw a grenade.

Chaiyaphum had been involved in campaign against drug-use since his childhood. So, those who knew him cannot believe he was involved in any illicit activity. Phongsanai, who has been detained and was Chaiyaphum's roommate, has told activists who visited him that they were on their regular route to Chiang Mai after music activities at school in Chiang Dao and had no idea about the narcotics.

Police have reportedly interrogated and charged a soldier with intentional killing of Chaiyaphum before transferring the soldier to his unit at Preechakorn camp. Meanwhile, the army has denied overreacting or using excessive force in the fatal shooting and claimed that the soldiers acted in self-defense.

“Thai government should immediately conduct fair and transparent investigation into Chaiyaphum's killing, including through Department of Special Investigation,” said AIPP's Chairperson Kittisak Rattankrajangsri. “Life of a youth activist cannot be just taken away without any accountability against national and international human rights obligations of Thailand.”

The army had earlier sued with Chaiyaphum's guardian Maitree Chareonsuksakul for violating the Computer Crime Act after Maitree uploaded a video of soldiers slapping local people on the Internet. Maitree was acquitted of the charge last year.

Chaiyapoom was an outspoken activist working with Ton Kla Youth Network. He was engaged to promote the rights of indigenous Lahu and other groups in northern Thailand, particularly in relation to citizenship and education and against abuses of security forces in anti-drug operations. He was also a music composer and documentary maker, who has produced several short films, including the famous [“A Comb and A Buckle”](#).

AIPP requests the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand to immediately and effectively investigate into the case to bring out the truth and provide justice for the killing. Further, it expresses heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and community members for the irreparable loss.

*AIPP is a regional organization of indigenous peoples movements in Asia with 48 member organizations in 14 countries, including Thailand.*