



NGO: EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE (ECLJ)

**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
53RD SESSION**

**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND
FOR THE 53RD SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Kingdom of Thailand (Thailand).

Background

2. Thailand is a country located in Southeast Asia and has a population of approximately 66.2 million people.¹ The population is predominantly Buddhist, with approximately 94.6% of the population identifying as Buddhist, 4.3% as Muslim, and 1.1% as Christian.²

3. Thailand's last review was held on November 10, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Thailand received 278 recommendations, 218 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Turkey, and supported by Thailand, that the government “[c]ontinue efforts to promote and protect ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.”⁵ It was also recommended by Syria, and supported by Thailand, that the government “[e]xpand the scope of social, health and legal support provided to victims of human trafficking, including by continuing the efforts to train a qualified staff to identify the victims and analyse their needs.”⁶ In our last UPR for Thailand, we also expressed concern over the problem of human trafficking and the need to increase resources to effectively combat this problem.

Legal Framework

Christian Persecution

4. Under Section 31 of the Constitution of Thailand:

A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles, provided that it shall not be adverse to the duties of all Thai people,

¹ *Thailand*, BRITANNICA (Oct. 22, 2025), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Thailand>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review – Thailand*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/th-index> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁴ *Infographic – Thailand*, OHCHR, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/thailand_infographic.pdf (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Thailand (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Thematic List of Recommendations at 46 (2021), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UPR39_Thailand_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.doc.

⁶ *Id.* at 15.

neither shall it endanger the safety of the State, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals.⁷

5. However, the Constitution grants Buddhism protective status. Under Section 67 of the Constitution:

The State should support and protect Buddhism and other religions.

In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion observed by the majority of Thai people for a long period of time, the State should promote and support education and dissemination of dharmic principles of Theravada Buddhism for the development of mind and wisdom development, and shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form. The State should also encourage Buddhists to participate in implementing such measures or mechanisms.⁸

6. Additionally, the 1962 Sangha Acts prohibits insulting or defaming Buddhism and its clergy.⁹ Individuals found guilty of violating this law can face up to one year in prison or a fine of up to 20,000 baht.¹⁰

7. Thailand is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹¹ Under Article 18 of the ICCPR:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.¹²

8. Furthermore, under Article 27 of the ICCPR:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the

⁷ CONST. THAILAND (2017) § 31, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Thailand_2017.

⁸ *Id.* at § 67.

⁹ *Thailand*, END BLASPHEMY LAWS, <https://end-blasphe-my-laws.org/countries/asia-central-southern-and-south-eastern/thailand/> (last updated June 18, 2020).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Ratification Status for Thailand*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/treaty.aspx (select “Thailand” from country dropdown menu) (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

¹² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.¹³

Human Trafficking

9. Under Section 6 of The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act,

Whoever, for the purpose of exploitation, does any of the following acts:

(1) procuring, buying, selling, vending, bringing from or sending to, detaining or confining, harboring, or receiving any person, by means of the threat or use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or of the giving money or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person in allowing the offender to exploit the person under his control; or

(2) procuring, buying, selling, vending, bringing from or sending to, detaining or confining, harboring, or receiving a child;

is guilty of trafficking in persons.¹⁴

10. Under Article 8 of the ICCPR, “No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held in servitude.”¹⁵

11. Additionally, Thailand is a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁶ Under Article 9 sec. 1 of this Protocol:

1. States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures:

(a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization.¹⁷

¹³ *Id.* at art. 27.

¹⁴ The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act B.E. 2551 (2008) § 6 (Thai), <https://library.siam-legal.com/thai-law/anti-trafficking-persons-act-general-provision-sections-6-14/>.

¹⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 8, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

¹⁶ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, Dec. 25, 2003, 2237 U.N.T.S. 319. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%202237/v2237.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 346-47.

Christian Persecution

12. In Thailand, Christians face persecution from their families and their community at large. In Thailand, to be Thai is to be Buddhist.¹⁸ Because of this, individuals who convert from Buddhism to Christianity are seen as abandoning their culture and adopting foreign practices.¹⁹ While violence against Christians is rare, one Christian pastor shared that Christian converts are often marginalized, scrutinized, and have their “Thainess” challenged.²⁰

13. Because Buddhism is so intertwined with the culture, Christians can often feel ostracized, as all important events include aspects of Buddhism.²¹ One Christian student shared how students at many universities are expected to bow down to statues and participate in ceremonial practices that go against Christianity.²² As students, they can feel pressure to attend these ceremonies or bow to statues out of fear of standing out and being ostracized.²³

14. Another challenge Christian converts face is the pressure to renounce their faith and return to Buddhism. One Christian pastor shared the story of a young Christian convert who was kicked out of his house for converting to Christianity.²⁴

15. Additionally, we are concerned about Thailand’s blasphemy laws that prevent insulting or defaming Buddhism, as this can be used to target and silence minority religions like Christianity. This type of vague law can be used to target Christians for sharing their faith and stating that Christianity is the only true religion, not Buddhism. Claiming that Buddhism is a false religion can be interpreted as insulting or defaming Buddhism. Blasphemy laws are in contravention of the ICCPR, which guarantees individuals the right “to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”²⁵ This right also extends to members of minority religions.²⁶

16. Further, since its last UPR, the government has been hostile to Christian refugees, particularly Montagnard Christian refugees from Vietnam. In Thailand, there are more than 4,000 refugees from Vietnam, many of whom have fled because they were being persecuted because of their Christian faith.²⁷

¹⁸ William Kenneth Nelson, *Interactions Between Christians and Buddhists in Thailand*, FULLER STUDIO, <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/praxis-interactions-between-christians-and-buddhists-in-thailand/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Rebecca Brittingham, *Missionaries Have Gone to Thailand for 200 Years. Why Aren't There More Christians?*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (July 8, 2024), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/07/thailand-missions-christianity-low-buddhism-challenges/>.

²² Patricia Engler, *360 in 180 – Bowing to Statues; Becoming Monks: Challenges Students Face in Thailand*, ANSWERS IN GENESIS, <https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/patricia-engler/2020/02/05/challenges-christian-students-face-in-thailand-part-12/?srsltid=AfmBOooeW68wv0J0u75ngTncetU8hZ91jytSVTlaGxUAWVvxTV8W8Fi>.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Nelson, *supra* note 18.

²⁵ ICCPR art. 18, *supra* note 12.

²⁶ *Id.* art. 27.

²⁷ *More Than 60 Montagnard Christians Arrested in Thailand*, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://persecution.org/2025/02/25/more-than-60-montagnard-christians-arrested-in-thailand/>.

17. On February 23, 2025, more than sixty Montagnard Christian refugees from Vietnam were arrested in Bangkok, Thailand.²⁸

18. In 2024, Vietnamese Montagnard Christians, who fled to Thailand seeking asylum, were continuously questioned and harassed by Thai and Vietnamese officials.²⁹ In one case, on March 14, 2024, Thai police took Vietnamese police to Bang Len District, where they proceeded to question the Montagnard Christians.³⁰

19. Lu A Da, a Hmong preacher and missionary, had fled to Thailand to seek refugee status.³¹ In December 2023, he was arrested and was threatened with extradition back to Vietnam, where he would face religious persecution.³²

20. In November 2023, eleven Montagnard Christian refugees were arrested by authorities.³³

Human Trafficking

21. Human trafficking is a global problem that impacts millions of people around the world and generates more than \$150 billion annually.³⁴ Traffickers prey on individuals and exploit them for cheap labor and sexual services.³⁵ To accomplish this, traffickers often entice their victims with false promises of good paying jobs with great benefits.³⁶ However, these individuals are then often exploited and forced to work as slaves, receiving very little compensation, if any.³⁷

22. Thailand serves as an origin, transit, and destination country for human trafficking.³⁸ In Thailand, trafficking for both forced labor and sexual exploitation is a problem.³⁹ Victims from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, China, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, and India are forced into working in commercial fishing and in factories.⁴⁰ For example, on January 16, 2025, Thai authorities arrested an individual and charged him with committing human trafficking and exploiting individuals for forced

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Authorities in Thailand Continue to Harass Christian Refugees*, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Mar. 25, 2024), <https://persecution.org/2024/03/25/authorities-in-thailand-continue-to-harass-christian-refugees/>.

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Réfugié from Persecution*, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Feb. 7, 2024), <https://persecution.org/2024/02/07/refugie-from-persecution/>.

³² *Lu A Da*, PROJECT 88, <https://the88project.org/profile/623/lu-a-da/>.

³³ *Bleak Christmas for Hmong and Montagnard Christians Arrested and Harassed in Thailand*, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Dec. 21, 2023), <https://persecution.org/2023/12/21/bleak-christmas-for-hmong-and-montagnard-christians-arrested-and-harassed-in-thailand/>.

³⁴ *8 Facts You Need to Know about Human Trafficking in the 21st Century*, UNITED NATIONS THAILAND (Jul. 30, 2024), <https://thailand.un.org/en/275298-8-facts-you-need-know-about-human-trafficking-21st-century>.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Thailand*, GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/thailand> (last visited Apr 7, 2026).

³⁹ *Country Profiles - Thailand*, INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/thailand/>.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

labor.⁴¹ He was accused of trafficking nine men from Myanmar for forced labor.⁴² Additionally, in another case in 2025, authorities were able to rescue three girls who were trafficked and sexually abused.⁴³ Authorities were also able to arrest seven traffickers and five individuals who purchased sexual services from the girls.⁴⁴

23.. Sex traffickers target women and children from Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar.⁴⁵ Further, sex traffickers also target Thai nationals to traffic them to North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.⁴⁶ For example, in June 2025, authorities in Bangkok arrested a man for suspected human trafficking at Suvarnabhumi Airport.⁴⁷ The suspect was arrested for his involvement in the transnational human trafficking of women for prostitution.⁴⁸

24. Since Thailand's last UPR, the government has taken numerous steps to increase its ability to effectively combat human trafficking. For example, in March 2022, the government adopted a National Referral Mechanism that ensured that victims of human trafficking were referred to the necessary services to get the help that they needed.⁴⁹ The National Referral Mechanism also provides authorities with guidelines for screening potential victims of human trafficking.⁵⁰ Additionally, between 2017 and 2024, the government allocated more than \$160 million toward its efforts to prevent and suppress human trafficking.⁵¹ In 2024, the government allocated \$9.5 million towards these efforts.⁵²

25. Further, in October 2024, the Prime Minister implemented the Measures for Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons in Business Establishments, Factories, and Vehicles.⁵³ These new measures require employers to provide their employees with information and training regarding human trafficking at least once a year.⁵⁴ That same year, the government also opened

⁴¹ *DSI Arrests a Suspect in Human Trafficking Case Involving Deception of Male Myanmar Workers to Work in Online Sales for Company in Cambodia*, DSI (Jan. 17, 2025),

https://www.dsi.go.th/en/Detail/9d2b18ed70ebd089d88f20a638b3fc71?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *3 Girls Freed, 7 Traffickers and 5 Buyers Arrested in One Multifaceted Case in Thailand*, THE EXODUS ROAD (Aug. 8, 2025), <https://theexodusroad.com/operation-multifaceted/>.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ See U.S. Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Thailand, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/thailand/> (last visited Apr 7, 2026).

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Singaporean Arrested for Human Trafficking at Bangkok Airport*, KHAOSOD ENGLISH (June 18, 2025),

<https://www.khaosodenglish.com/news/2025/06/18/singaporean-arrested-for-human-trafficking-at-bangkok-airport/>.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Modern Slavery in Thailand*, WALK FREE, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/thailand/> (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ Royal Thai Government's Country Report on Anti Human Trafficking Efforts 1 (2024), <https://www.thaianti-humantraffickingaction.org/Home/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FINAL-2024-Country-Report-on-Anti-Human-Trafficking-Efforts.pdf>.

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Challenging Thailand's Cycle of Corruption & Human Trafficking*, CTR. FOR STRATEGIC AND INT'L STUD., <https://features.csis.org/challenging-thailands-cycle-of-corruption-human-trafficking/index.html#:~:text=In%20October%202024%2C%20Prime%20Minister,of%20Thailand%27s%20top%20national%20agendas.>

⁵⁴ *Id.*

the Thailand Victim Identification and Referral Center for Bangkok to increase its ability to support victims and established the Electronic Database System for Anti-Human Trafficking (E-AHT). The E-AHT provides a comprehensive data system that can be shared across all relevant agencies to screen and identify victims of human trafficking.⁵⁵

26. Thailand's efforts to increase its ability to combat human trafficking are already having an impact. In 2024, authorities prosecuted 379 cases of human trafficking, a 20.7% increase from the previous year.⁵⁶ This increase is a result of newly enacted policies, such as increased electronic data collection.⁵⁷ Further, authorities expanded investigations to also go after individuals who purchase sexual services from victims.⁵⁸ This alone led to the prosecution of 130 individuals in 2024.⁵⁹

27. Thailand has also taken steps to prosecute corrupt officials who are complicit in human trafficking.⁶⁰ In 2024, cases were initiated against ten government officials.⁶¹ One of the cases involved three police officers who were conspiring to commit human trafficking and exploit individuals.⁶² The police officers used torture and beatings to exercise their control over the victims.⁶³

28. In addition to prosecuting human traffickers, the government has also increased the aid that is provided to victims of human trafficking.⁶⁴ In 2024, courts awarded victims more than \$1.2 million across 142 cases, a 44.65% increase from the previous year.⁶⁵ This is critical as Thailand has an obligation under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to not just prosecute human traffickers but also protect victims from revictimization.⁶⁶

Recommendations

29. Thailand must respect religious freedom for all its citizens, not just those belonging to the majority religion. Further, we ask that Thailand amend its laws by getting rid of its blasphemy laws that can be used to target adherents of minority religions. Further, Thailand must guarantee societal respect for other religions and allow Christians and other religious minorities to practice their faith in public.

⁵⁵ *Royal Thai Government's Country Report on Anti Human Trafficking Efforts*, *supra* note 51, at 1.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 2.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 19.

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime art. 9 § 1, *supra* note 16.

30. We want to encourage Thailand to continue the work it has recently done to combat human trafficking. These efforts have already been shown to increase the number of human trafficking prosecutions annually. It is important that Thailand continue to commit resources to eradicating human trafficking.

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