

“Pai Dao Din”: Speaking out from his temporary freedom

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Being held in detention has become so commonplace for Jatupat Boonpattaraksa or “Pai Dao Din” that he’s lost count on how many times it’s happened. But the seriousness in his eyes shows how troubling his [latest jailing on October 13](#) has been.

The Isaan Record had an opportunity to interview him briefly on [Facebook Live](#) before the #โทรโข่งของราษฎร [#ThePeopleMegaphone] activity, held at the Complex building at Khon Kaen University this past Thursday (October 29).

Before the interview, we teased him about the back of his new haircut displayed the symbol of anarchy.

“The hairstyle in the prison and the police’s hairstyle are the same. So, I did this haircut. Our proposition was that we wanted to have whatever hairstyle that wasn’t similar to that of the police,” Pai said, bursting out in laughter.

***The Isaan Record:* When you got released from prison on October 23, how did you feel?**

Pai Dao Din: My first feeling was confusion about how I got out...and got in. I was confused because we couldn't explain it. There was no guarantee, nothing at all for us to assess whether we ought to be in there or be released. Everything happened so fast.

IR: How was life in prison?

PDD: I was at Klong Prem Central Prison from the beginning. They detained us for 14 days in Room No. 5, Zone 2 which is used as COVID quarantine. They put us in the quarantine room. It was worse because when COVID comes, everyone has to be quarantined. We weren't able to go downstairs and spend our daily life there. We had to be only in that room. It was boring even though we could watch TV, sleep all day...it was still boring. No one would want to sleep all day, every day. But with some books to read, it was a relief.

The food was bad at first. But when we made a complaint, they adjusted. For instance, we all got our own spoons and it had been sanitized; there was more meat in the food and better tasting. Things improved. Personally, I smoke but the prison didn't allow smoking. So I was pretty frustrated.

Since I'd experienced being in prison, I wasn't frightened. But when I asked my younger friends there with me, they'd become so frightened and paranoid because they had too much time to ruminate. Their minds festered. They kept asking why they had to be there. Some tried to read legal provisions so they could defend themselves in court but found out they couldn't find any legal point to raise. They were all confused because most of them studied law and wanted to use the law as a tool to fight. But as it turned out, like one was arguing that the court should not have put them into prison as it was not just, right? But I understood that the court's understanding of justice was distorted.



Pai Dao Din, donning his new hairstyle, speaking at the event

IR: How does your feeling about imprisonment this time differ from the time you were imprisoned for violating Article 112?

PDD: It was very long back that time. This one was short and there was hope we'd be released.

IR: After being arrested, there was a rumor that you were going to be detained for a long time. Did you hear this in the prison?

PDD: No. As I've said, the use of laws or powers in this country is unpredictable. There are no standards. We can't look at previous cases, laws, or anything else to predict how the court might view the case or what the penalty might be. Even the lawyer working on our case couldn't make an assessment because there's a politics from above [deciding]. Even though the court says it isn't involved in politics, it's this politics [from above] that's jailed each one of us. It's because of [our demand to demand reform of the monarchy that eight of our friends are still in prison.

IR: Going back to October, what happened?

PDD: On October 13, we set up a small stage and were waiting for activist friends from other provinces to arrive. We set up a camp and rested, waiting for October 14. Then when we were going to set up the stage, our first task, we were broken up. They [the police] wouldn't allow us to place a tent, wouldn't allow us to do this and that. In the afternoon, we hadn't been able to ready the stage yet; we then decided we'd get it ready that evening. If the royal motorcade or whatever passed, then we'd get the stage ready, something like that. We had just set up the stage and they dispersed us. We didn't understand because the road should be for everyone. We should be able to use the road as well.



Pai Dao Din and the students from KKU arrested on October 13 talking about their arrest

and imprisonment

IR: The reason for the dispersing of the rally on Oct 13 was the royal motorcade passing?

PDD: Hmm...it's not strange, meaning it's not strange that it's that way because it seems like others can't use the road in this country.

IR: At this time, students are talking about reform of the monarchy. Do you have the thought that one day, the road should be shared and should not be blocked for the royal motorcade?

PDD: Yes, they are human like us with the same humanity. We should have the same right to use the road. We are the same as humans, so we should have the same right to speak.

IR: For this and many other incidents, there are many court cases against you. Are you afraid to fight ceaselessly or involving yourself in politics?

PDD: No, because we haven't done anything wrong. We don't have to be afraid or frightened because what we do, we believe it's the right thing and it has always been so, because we want everyone to be equal. Thus, as we come out and speak and make demands, we don't want [what we do] to result in court cases. We've never wanted any court cases. We don't want to be arrested. We come out and make demands because we think we have the right to demand a resolution for any issue in this country.

This country belongs to all people, not a single person. We are one of the citizens who own the country. We should voice our opinions, have a role, and have the freedom to express our thoughts on issues, from those concerning the government, to those concerning the constitution and those of the monarchy. Therefore, these three demands, I think, are concrete and clear, and talk very explicitly about the issues facing Thailand.

IR: When will there be a response to the student demands, in your opinion?

PDD: I don't know when. But for sure the movement will not stop. At this time, there are many movements in multiple spots of Bangkok and the countryside. I think what we can do is maintain this movement and its demands. For the question of when, I think the government should listen to us. There's been a lot of times when there's people coming out and chasing us away. You [the government] haven't listened to us, so what's it going to be?



Jatupat “Pai Dao Din” Boonpattaraksa: “I want the king to adjust according to our demands. Reform is not abolition.”

IR: What is the actual goal of submitting the letter to the German embassy?

PDD: Submitting the [letter to the German embassy](#) is demanding accountability because with the structure of this country, we can't get accountability. We can't do anything. But on the international or universal level, rights and liberties operate under standards. Every human ought to have political rights that no one can infringe upon. It's under these kinds of standards that the Thai king acts in Germany.

I think that he [the King] doesn't view himself as being above the law [there], as being a person with the status that is under the law. We demanded the embassy to scrutinize four matters: taxes, the order to violate human rights, the display of Hitler's photos, and the torture of royal servants. [There are] things we will never know. I think [the evidence of these things] must be there as he spends most of his time there.

IR: Do you think this movement and you are at risk for talking about Rama X?

PDD: We are speaking rationally and believe that we should speak out about anything that is a problem. Today, the bravery of our friends who are being imprisoned, they bravely speak the truth of things that all of us already know, and take the consequences of speaking the truth. Therefore we must be brave enough to accept the truth. If we aren't able to speak the truth, then justice shall never arise. When there is not justice, there shall never be peace.

IR: We have heard that Rama X also supports democracy. If you had an opportunity to sit before him, what would you say to him?

PDD: I would like the king to adjust according to our proposals. Reform isn't abolition. It is an adjustment of power, changes to some structures so that he is under the same laws as everybody else, under reason. I think if there is an adjustment, we can live together in this society. The demands under our proposal, I think, are not difficult—the ten demands or whatever, the royal property reform, the exercise of power, Article 112, Article 6 in the constitution, or any other of the proposals. I think this is a matter of adjusting because everyone agrees with them.

Read thai version here [“ไฟ่ ดาวดิน” กับ อิศรภาพชั่วคราว](#)