

# Protesters break into Thai Parliament to stop NLA working

Friday 14 December 2007, by [AFP](#), [Bangkok Post](#), [RAJOO Arul](#), [Xinhua](#) (Date first published: 12 December 2007).

## Contents

- [Thai protesters shut down](#)
- [Protesters break into Thai](#)
- [NLA postpones meeting after](#)
- [NGOs call for dissolution of](#)
- [Parliament session cancelled](#)
- [Thai Protesters Storm Parliame](#)

## Thai protesters shut down parliament

BANGKOK (AFP) --- Hundreds of protesters forced Thailand's army-installed parliament to suspend its meetings Wednesday after the activists stormed into the chamber's halls.

About 1,500 union advocates, students and political activists surrounded the parliament building, claiming the military-appointed lawmakers had no mandate to pass legislation, an AFP reporter witnessed.

About 100 of them slipped past security and stormed into the parliament's meeting rooms, prompting lawmakers to suspend deliberations.

They left after about one hour, after the parliament agreed not to work for the rest of the day.

"We want the National Legislative Assembly to close this session and stop violating the people's rights. Most of the laws adopted by this assembly violate the people's rights and give more power to government officials," said former senator Jon Ungphakorn, who led the protest.

"The laws adopted have also favoured capitalists," he said.

The protesters in particular cited a new internal security bill, which has already passed through a first reading and could be approved before parliament

dissolves ahead of the December 23 general elections.

If enacted, the security law would give a military body, under the prime minister's control, sweeping powers to suspend basic rights and override normal government procedures anywhere in the country at any time.

Critics say the law would enable the military to dictate government policy from behind the scenes while shielding officials from prosecution for any abuses.

The protesters also slammed proposed laws that would allow privatisation of state utilities and give more autonomy public universities.

"Adoption and deliberation on these important bills should be done by elected members of parliament, because then the people are able to participate," Jon said.

After the September 2006 coup that overthrew the elected government of prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the junta handpicked the 250 members of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to function as a parliament.

Activists say that with general elections less than two weeks away, the body no longer has any mandate and should stop passing laws.

But the parliament's president, Meechai Ruchupan, vowed to pass a raft of new laws before the elections.

"I am sorry for what happened today and I have not yet scheduled our next meeting. But I want to reaffirm that the NLA must continue to work and deliberate on at least 45 bills," he told reporters.

<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM...>

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## **Protesters break into Thai Parliament to stop NLA working**

BANGKOK, Dec. 12 (Xinhua) — Part of the 1,000 Thai protesters, gathering in front of the Parliament compound in Bangkok since Wednesday morning, climbed over the wall and broke the police fence at noon, demanding the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to stop working.

According to a report of the FM 100 Traffic Radio, more than 1,000 protesters arrived at the Parliament at 8 a.m. local time and formed a picket line in front of three main entrances of the Parliament to prevent NLA members from entering the compound.

At about 12 a.m. local time, some 100 protesters broke into the compound while dozens of policemen inside who could do nothing but standing by to watch the protesters singing outside the assembly hall and shouting for the NLA members to stop working.

Jon Ungpakorn, a Chulalongkorn University lecturer and the leader of the protest, was quoted by local news network The Nationas saying that the NLA should stop enacting new law during its remaining term of a few days.

He said the NLA was hurting the public by issuing new laws for the benefit of the military and investors at the cost of the people.

The NLA, an interim legislative body set up after last year's military coup, will end its mission before the end of 2007. A new general election will be held on Dec. 23 this year and the new House of Representatives is expected to take up the appointment early next year.

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### **NLA postpones meeting after rally**

(BangkokPost.com) - National Legislative Assembly (NLA) speaker Meechai Ruchupan ordered the cancellation of Wednesday's meeting after hundreds of protesters stormed into the chamber's hall to stop legislators from passing laws.

The protesters, including political activists, students and political activists, claimed that the lawmakers, appointed by the military junta, had no mandate to pass legislation.

"I'm deeply sorry with what happened today...but I insisted that the NLA will have to continue with our duty until a new parliament is formed," Mr Meechai said.

He insisted that the NLA did not pass legislation with haste, adding that laws passed by this NLA could still be amended.

When asked when the NLA will convene again, Mr Meechai said the date is to be set.

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## **Earlier story**

### **NGOs call for dissolution of legislative branch**

(BangkokPost.com) — Some 1,000 members of non-governmental organizations sealed off the entrance to Government House Wednesday morning, calling for the dissolution of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA).

Led by NGO executive Jon Ungpakorn, the rally-goers marched outside Government House just moments before members of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) were due to start meeting.

The group claimed that the government's legislative branch has been responsible for causing the country's downfall by passing laws they described as "a violation of human rights".

The NLA was also accused of empowering government agencies through the implementation of some of these laws.

They cited the National Security bill as an example of how the NLA had played a part in perpetuating military power.

They also branded the law on independent universities, saying it raised the cost of education and said new privatization laws only benefited investors at the cost of the general public.

Emergency police were called to the scene to ensure order as NLA members were unable to leave the building.

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## **Parliament session cancelled after protesters storm into building**

BANGKOK, Dec 12 (TNA) — Thailand's National Legislative Assembly (NLA) abruptly suspended its session Wednesday after over 200 protesters stormed into the parliament building in central Bangkok.

Armed police and commandos halted the surge of protesters into the chambers of parliament, but the legislators ended their session in response.

More than 1,500 protesters, led by 2005 Magsaysay awardee Jon Ungpakorn, Wednesday morning blocked all entrances to Parliament in a bid to force the remnant NLA members from issuing new laws, when it is both strongly reduced in membership and close to the expiration of its mandate.

The protesters charged that laws approved earlier by legislators benefited only civil servants and business interests and carried the country backward.

More than 200 armed police and army commandos stood on alert while the protesters demanded that the NLA cease passing new legislation which they claimed was in violation of the people's rights.

The protesters stated that the remaining legislators should not enact any new laws during their remaining term in office as the country will hold a general election on December 23.

Some 200 protesters, however, later slipped past security and managed to storm into the building while the NLA members were in session. They tried to enter the meeting room but were prevented by armed police and commandos.

Fearing that the situation would deteriorate, the assembly postponed the meeting. Learning of the cancellation, the protesters dispersed without violence. (TNA-MCOT)-E111

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## **Thai Protesters Storm Parliament**

By D. Arul Rajoo

BANGKOK, Dec 12 (Bernama) — Hundreds of protesters stormed the Parliament building here today demanding the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to stop drafting new laws.

The protesters wanted the NLA to cancel 11 bills under consideration as they would go against the spirit of freedom and people's rights guaranteed under the new constitution which was passed in a referendum in August.

The protesters, from several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), arrived at the Parliament House as early as 7am and blocked the entrance to stop NLA members from going in.

Former senator and Thai NGO Coordinating Committee chairman Jon Ungpakorn, who led the protest, said NLA members should stop drafting new laws as they had only two more weeks to exist.

"The new laws are benefiting only the military and not the people, and it's against human rights," Ungpakorn told reporters.

Instead, he said, the drafting exercise should be taken over by the new government to be elected from the Dec 23 election and after getting feedback from the public.

With the situation getting out of control, NLA speaker Meechai Ruchuphan decided to postpone proceedings.

One of the bills under scrutiny is the Draft Act on the Maintenance of National Security in the Kingdom, which gives the Internal Security Operations Command under the control of the prime minister extensive emergency-style powers.