



25th July 2023

## **FORSEA Statement regarding Thailand's TOP NEWS's Baseless News Story about the Abolition of the Monarchy in Thailand**

It has come to our attention that the Thai language television channel Top News had recently broadcast what amounts to Fake News: that the founding retreat of FORSEA in Paris in July 2018 was aimed at “abolishing the monarchy in Thailand”. The broadcaster offered no shred of corroborating evidence, be it in the form of verified minutes of the meeting, bona fide agendas, or audio-visual recordings to substantiate its wild claims.

Top News also broadcast the invitation email sent out by one of the founding organizers, Thai academic and dissident Dr Pavin Chachavalpongpun, along with a list of meeting invitees, many of whom did not even attend the retreat or end up joining FORSEA.

We categorically reject this baseless news story. It is our position that the political system and the corresponding social order in a country are subjects that ultimately only concern those who live within that system.

Forces of Renewal for Southeast Asia or FORSEA [[www.forsea.co](http://www.forsea.co)] is a grassroots network of scholars and activists who share a common democratic vision for Southeast Asia as a regional community. We launched our network in Kuala Lumpur amidst the Malaysian Spring. Our vision goes beyond the traditional ideas of state-centred democracy and embraces ecological sensitivity, fairness, and equality among the region's inhabitants and its future generations. It is guided by the forward-looking vision of Southeast Asian grassroots communities living in peace within the broader democratic framework.

FORSEA was birthed at the aforementioned meeting outside Paris in the summer of 2018. Amongst the participants at this founding meeting were civil society activists, socially conscious entrepreneurs, and engaged scholars and artists from Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, and France. Subsequently, we expanded our circle of democrats to include those from Indonesia and the Philippines.

At no point during our 2-day retreat was the Thai monarchy discussed, even as an afterthought. For the realization of our joint vision, the founding participants of FORSEA did not concern themselves with any single political system, be it Thailand's monarchy, Myanmar's quasi-democratic genocidal regime, Cambodia's autocracy, or the one-party city-state of Singapore.

We demand that Top News retract the news story and issue a public apology in Thai and English languages to those on the list of invitees.

On behalf of the founding organizers,

Dr Zarni