

Thank you Madam Chair,

My name is Hasan. I am from Patani, a region in the deep south of Thailand with a large ethnic Muslim Malay community. We are separate from the majority ethnic Malay in Malaysia and Indonesia and have our own Patani identity and regional Yawi-Malay language. We are one of the least developed areas of Thailand. We have collectively attempted to build school systems for teaching our language and culture to our children because it is not taught in government schools.

Our language is in crisis because of the long-term assimilation policy by Thai administrations, for example, by changing our place names into Thai, adaptation of Thai words, incorrect grammar and lack of written literacy. Thailand does not have any policies to promote and protect our identity and language; they promote Thai culture over Patani culture in our Tadika schools and have intervened in our school curriculum and tried to force spelling of Yawi in Thai characters.

At present, the teaching of Patani-Malay language and culture has been further disrupted as the Thai government charges without facts that these schools harbor separatists and are schools for extremist thought. Hundreds of Malay teachers have been arrested on suspicion of supporting separatists, and armed military personnel have been sent to our schools. This situation is dangerous as it makes schools the target of attacks by opposition armed groups.

Therefore to the Forum I would also like to stress how difficult it is to develop one's minority language and culture when under aggressive assimilation policies and practices, and we are seeing the negative impact of this on our community.

To the Thai government, I would like to make the following recommendations:

- 1) Thailand must stop the ethnic assimilation especially through the Malay school curriculum
- 2) Schools must not be a place of armed soldiers or military operations.
- 3) Tadika and pondok schools must be free to develop Patani language and culture without suspicion.