



PRIME MINISTER

51/92

VIOLENCE IN BANGKOK

Now that the full extent and character of the recent violence in Bangkok has become clearer, I take the opportunity on behalf of all Australians to express our horror at the actions which have led to this needless loss of life.

We are appalled at the widespread use of excessive force by the Thai military.

The Thai Ambassador is being called in today to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to be told of the strength of Australia's concern over the situation in Thailand. Our Ambassador to Thailand is under instructions to repeat these concerns at senior level in Bangkok.

Our Embassy in Thailand is closely monitoring developments - in particular the tense stand-off between pro-democracy demonstrators and troops at Ramkhamhaeng University. I urge the Thai Government to ensure that the troops act with maximum restraint to avoid further bloodshed.

Footage of troops firing on unarmed demonstrators outside the Royal Hotel, and the harrowing scenes depicted in the hotel lobby and elsewhere, are in tragic contrast with the great strides Thailand has made in recent years towards prosperity and stability.

I hope that the Thai Government will do all in its power to restore conditions whereby political differences can be resolved peacefully.

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Kerin, will be closely following developments in Thailand. We will be looking at our relations with Thailand in the light of how the situation unfolds.

20 May 1992