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HEADLINE: In **Thailand**, Militants Kill One Student and Threaten Others

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BODY:

A university in the troubled **southern** region of **Thailand** called in the country's military this month to guard the campus during final examinations after a student was shot dead by suspected militants.

Dussadeebun Ritsuthorn, a communications-management student at the Prince of Songkla University's campus in Pattani, was gunned down as he was returning to his dormitory on the morning of October 9. He was shot multiple times in the head by an assailant riding on the back of a motorcycle.

Police officials said that the killers had left a note at the scene that claimed the shooting was in retaliation for the arrest of Muslim students suspected of violence in **southern Thailand**. The attackers threatened to kill a university student each time a Muslim student was arrested.

Thailand's prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, dismissed the threat and said the police would continue to crack down on militants in the country's majority-Muslim region, according to the Bangkok Post, an English-language daily newspaper.

The shooting has rocked the university, however. Most students have stayed inside their residences since the attack and traveled only to class to take their exams. Few have visited the city's late-night tea shops, where students normally congregate.

"We called in the police and the military to protect the students," said Wullop Santipracha, the university's vice president for academic affairs. "Exams had to be suspended. The students were scared, but they were able to finish today."

Widespread Fighting

It was unknown whether the attackers had singled out Mr. Dussadeebun.

According to friends of his, Mr. Dussadeebun, a member of the country's Buddhist majority, had a keen interest in Islam and was a member of Muslims for Peace, a student group open to people of all beliefs.

He was the son of a police superintendent, and there was speculation that he might have been a government informant. Local police officials, as well as the student's father, denied the suggestion.

More than 320 people, most of them Muslims, have died since fighting erupted in **Thailand's southern** provinces in January. On April 28, in the single worst day of violence, more than 100 suspected militants -- some of them unarmed -- were gunned down by Thai soldiers.

Subsequent investigations revealed that many of those who had been killed had once attended local religious schools, known as ponohs.

The Thai government has accused those institutions, which are largely unregulated boarding

schools, of functioning as breeding grounds for militancy. During a weekly radio address last month, the prime minister said religious teachers were training their students in military tactics and encouraging attacks on government officials.

But human-rights groups argue that the government's raids on schools and the interrogation of students and teachers have been heavy-handed and have unnecessarily antagonized the country's six million Muslims, most of whom live in **Thailand's** impoverished **southern** provinces.

The police have arrested three people in connection with Mr. Dussadeebun's murder and are searching for a fourth suspect. Police officers also raided a house being rented by more than a dozen students. The officers seized computers and documents but made no arrests.

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PEACE CARAVAN: Group sends message of unity to South

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But can origami and concerts quell an uprising that has raged all year?

By the end of next month, one paper crane for each Thai will be presented to the three southernmost provinces as a show of solidarity by all the Kingdom's people for their suffering compatriots in the violent region.

The Flower and Paper Birds for Peace Group will be taking a peace caravan all over the country with the aim of gathering at least 60 million pieces of origami. Concerts and other public events will be organized in these regions, Pratchaya Srithanyarat, deputy chief of the group, said yesterday. "We gave serious thought about what kind of message we want to send to the troubled South. We agreed that the best thing is to let the people there know that we're concerned," said Pratchaya, a vocalist with the famous "songs for life" band, Caravan.

The group hopes to organize paper-folding networks and will distribute recycled paper to them. People will be asked to crease the paper into birds and flowers, and write some words of encouragement on them for the southerners. "As Thais, we want to do something about the problem and we believe the country's people share our concerns. And so we chose a peaceful way to tell them that violence has to stop," said Sumit Champrasit, the group's leader.

He recalled seeing a paper bird with a very moving message, which said Buddhists and Muslims were inseparable, with each community represented by a wing. For the bird to fly, the two wings must act in harmony, it said.

The peace campaign will start next month in Chiang Mai, then move to Ubon Ratchathani from November 12-14. The finale will be held at Sanam Luang in Bangkok from November 19-21.

Anyone unable to attend any of the scheduled events is welcome to mail in their craftwork to the organising committee. The origami caravan plans to reach Pattani, in the heart of the Muslim South, on November 26, where it hopes to team up with provincial authorities and residents. "This is our way of showing the people in the deep South that our thoughts are with them and that we feel their pain," said Arunsak Aonla-or, one of the more than 100 members of the group.

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The Nation