

Headline: Unrest rocks Bangkok for third night  
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## **Protests and shootings continue as unrest rocks Bangkok for a third night. By Ben Davies.**

LAST night, gunfire echoed again through Thailand's capital for the third straight night, after overnight violence left scores dead and hundreds others wounded in the worst outbreak of violence in more than 15 years.

Police and troops chased scattered groups of anti-government demonstrators, as Thai Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon moved to quell protests calling for his resignation. Up to 3,500 demonstrators had earlier surrounded one police station, calling for the release of over 1,300 people arrested in the late-night attack by troops on Monday.

Thousands of people joined in other pro-democracy protests mushrooming in widely scattered areas of the Thai capital. Police radio said 5,000 student protesters had gathered at Ramkhamhaeng University, in an eastern suburb of Bangkok.

In a televised broadcast to the nation, Gen Suchinda said communists were behind the demonstrations against his rule, in a veiled reference to former army chief Chavalit Yongchaiyuth, who is among a four-party opposition alliance that opposes Gen Suchinda's premiership.

Earlier unconfirmed reports stated that the King had asked Gen Suchinda to resign, but that the former head of the military had refused.

Most analysts say that given the present level of opposition and the unprecedented outbursts of shooting, the only way Gen Suchinda can now survive is to implement the sort of military regime now spurned in neighbouring Myanmar, or to flee the country, a repeat of the events following the student uprising of 1973.

Local newspapers reported that protests had spread in recent days to at least eight other areas of the country, including the city of Chiang Mai in the north, Khon Kaen in the north-east and Hat Yai in the south.

There were also reports of a run on food supplies and petrol stations were closed. Banks also closed early, due to a lack of cash. The BBC reported that the Thai Central Bank had set up a fund to help banks overcome any run of funds.

Anarchy erupted in the early hours of yesterday morning, when soldiers opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. Marauding bands of people set fire to buildings and cars.

More than 500 people were said to have been wounded, with deaths estimated at anything from 25 to 100. Sporadic gunfire swept the area along Bangkok's Ratchadamnoen Avenue.

"It was a summary execution," said one observer, who witnessed an earlier shooting of innocent bystanders which had come with no warning.

Even senior police officers at the scene expressed surprise early this morning that no tear gas had been used to try to peacefully disperse demonstrators.

The violence erupted for a second night after Chamlong Srimuang, a former Bangkok governor and a key opposition leader, and close aides were arrested on Monday.

In an apparent expression of concern over the bloody suppression, the US has halted a major military exercise with the Thais that, at its height, was to have involved a total of 20,000 troops.