



---

Statement from Wat Phra Dhammakaya  
19 February 2017

1. During the past three days, from 16-18 February 2017, Wat Phra Dhammakaya (WPD) has cooperated fully with government officials, allowing the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), the police, and its K-9 unit to conduct an exhaustive search of every room on every floor of every structure of WPD. Some buildings were searched as many as three times. WPD cooperated in allowing them to seal off structures deemed as evidence. The search proceeded smoothly, without conflict or complication.
2. On 19 February 2017, a government representative declared a statement ordering monks and laypeople to vacate the temple premises by 15.00 hrs. The monks and laypeople refused, as they *were* not and *are* not willing to easily give up the temple they have built with their own two hands through years of hard work and dedication. Many monks and devotees from other provinces became extremely concerned at the possibility of the seizure of temple property, and made their way to the temple throughout the day. Upon arrival, they were prohibited from entering Gates 5 and 6 by police that had taken over the area. The devotees rushed the gates and asked to share the area equally, with a common belief that the temple and its abbot, monks, and novices had been violated of their basic human rights. Because Buddhists in Thailand represent such a large proportion of Buddhists worldwide, the mistreatment of WPD by government officials is being seen as a persecution of Buddhism. Never has there been an incident of this nature in which an entire community of monks and lay devotees have been ordered to vacate temple grounds. This has since escalated into the situation this afternoon.
3. At this time, over 20,000 monks, novices, and laypeople remain in various sections of the temple in order to listen to Dhamma, chant, and meditate, out of concern for the temple and its monastic community.
4. On the first day of the search, 16 February 2017, every monk that had been summoned by officials willingly met with the officials, with the exception of those that were severely ill, unable to be reached, or out of the country. There is news circulating around social media that a monk who reported himself to officials was placed in custody. Concerned devotees plead the monks to not report themselves to officials during this sensitive period, as the situation cannot be trusted.
5. We received information from the press that police have prepared tear gas, water cannons, and long range acoustic devices (LRAD); and are threatening to cut off water and electricity. We plead with officials to avoid using excessive and unnecessary force, as this will only indicate their intention to cause distress among the monks, novices, and laypeople, including the children and elderly who have come to meditate and chant at the temple.
6. We understand that on 20 February 2017, representatives from a human rights organization will visit the temple to observe the current situation and assess whether help is needed to restore peace. Therefore, the monastic community and the laypeople plead with the government and the National Council for Peace and Order to revoke Article 44 due to the unwarranted distress and anxiety it has caused for Buddhists worldwide.

Ven. Sanitwong Wuttiwangso  
Director of Communications, Wat Phra Dhammakaya  
19 February 2017, 22.00 hrs.

For more information contact:  
Ven. Pasura Dantamano  
Chief of International Relations Division  
[pasura@dhammakaya.net](mailto:pasura@dhammakaya.net)