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**Statement from Wat Phra Dhammakaya**  
**4 March 2017, 9.00 hrs.**

Today marks the 17th day of human rights violations at Wat Phra Dhammakaya.  
The government has spent an estimated 50-85 million THB on the ongoing situation.

1. Thailand's Prime Minister asked Wat Phra Dhammakaya devotees to be mindful.  
We would like to say:

1.1 Temple devotees practice mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom everyday through acts of giving, observing the precepts, and meditating.

1.2 We ask the Prime Minister himself to be mindful and to control his anger when he's addressing Thai citizens in order to create an atmosphere of peace for the country.

1.3. In regards to the Prime Minister's statement to the media: "Don't listen to the wrong people" We would like to say that this assumption is false. Guilt in the case involving Klongchan Credit Union Cooperative, which has a search warrant, has yet to be determined. By saying this, the Prime Minister has confirmed that he has received the wrong information, causing him to make wrong decisions. There is partiality or prejudice that dwells in his mind because he does not know how to use Article 44 effectively. This case began with just a "court summons" because Most Ven. Dhammajayo could not appear for the hearing of charges due to illness.

2. The Chief of the Royal Thai Army stated that Most Ven. Dhammajayo is just one person and, as the leader, should make the sacrifice to avoid further distress on the devotees. We would like to provide the following response to this statement:

2.1. His devotees never felt their distress was because of Most Ven. Dhammajayo, but rather their distress is a result of Article 44. We are distressed because we are surrounded by the military forces, searched by DSI officers, and prohibited from entering the temple.

2.2. For years, Most. Ven. Dhammajayo has made many sacrifices and endured much hardship to build Wat Phra Dhammakaya. From what was once a paddy field, it has transformed into the temple you see today.

2.3. Devotees come to the temple to chant and meditate not only because of Most Ven. Dhammajayo, but because they feel that Buddhism is being attacked and destroyed by the government.

2.4. Even to this day, the devotees still feel that they have yet to give back even one percent of what Most Ven. Dhammajayo has done for them. He has dedicated his life to teach them to be virtuous, avoid doing bad deeds, and follow the teachings of the Lord Buddha.

2.5. Lawyer Winyat Chatmontree, secretariat for Lawyer for Peace, once stated, “He is just one person. If he turns himself in this will all be over.” This is illogical. Our response is, “There are hundreds of thousands of cases, why is it necessary to use a ‘special law’ against Wat Phra Dhammakaya?”

3. In response to the question: “If Ven. Dhammajayo is innocent, why won’t he turned himself in?” We’d like to say the following:

3.1 Most Ven. Dhammajayo did not flee but was fully willing to enter the judicial process from the very beginning. It was his chronic illness that led to the request for officials to inform him of his charges at the temple. Not only did officials not come to the temple, but instead, they obtained an arrest warrant for failing to appear for the summons. Additionally, there were numerous abnormal actions points to harassment, with the intent to seize the temple’s assets. The state should not act in this manner. This can also be used in the future against monks in every temple.

3.2 In fact, this case is still in the accusatory stage. It has not yet reached the courts. There has not yet been a verdict as to whether he is innocent or guilty. He is still considered innocent.

3.3 The temple is most willing to enter the judicial process, that is, the temple invites DSI to inform the charges at the temple because Most Ven. Dhammajayo is ill and unable to travel outside the temple. DSI claimed that they weren’t able to come, while at the same time, prosecutors, police officers, and legal experts stated that the law permits DSI to read him his charges anywhere, including the temple.

3.4 DSI officials were unyielding in their refusal to come to the temple and refused to allow Most Ven. Dhammajayo to postpone his hearing, but instead, issued an arrest warrant immediately.

3.5 Once the arrest warrant was issued, DSI informed us that if Most Ven. Dhammajayo turned himself in, bail would not be granted and that he would be instantly defrocked. Knowing this, no monk would turn himself in. Defrocking a monk is equivalent to a death sentence.

3.6 There are cases where monks who have an arrest warrant don’t necessarily need to be forcibly disrobed. For example, monks who are involved in politics from Nakorn Pathom Province. Why must there be a double standard by prosecuting Wat Phra Dhammakaya in this manner?

3.7 The odd behavior of state officials regarding this case has become increasingly clearer when there was a need to deploy several thousands of troops to arrest one chronically ill monk, who could not travel outside the temple to hear his charges.

3.8 Isn't it excessive? The statute of limitation for this case is 15 years. All we asked was time for Most Ven. Dhammajayo to rest and recuperate, but instead DSI refused and ordered 3 to 4 thousand soldiers to surround the temple in order to arrest him.

3.9 Wat Phra Dhammakaya also suddenly received over 300 new charges and violations in a span of 1 month. These charges are baseless, for instance, our chapel was built in the year 1977. One of the charges filed against us states that we did not obtain a proper building permit with the provincial office. This office was not even established until 1985. We can not have someone go back in time and approve our building! Most importantly, all buildings inside the temple grounds are exempt from needing a permit because they are used for religious purposes.

3.10 It has become clearer based on the events that have unfolded up to this day: the unjust use of Article 44 and the deployment of 5,000 troops to search the temple for Most Ven. Dhammajayo, in every area over 3 days. When they couldn't find him, they demanded that everyone vacate the temple premise within 3 pm on 19 February 2017.

3.11 Surrounding the temple with military troops, cutting off food supplies, blocking internet and cell phone signals, threatening to cut water and power, and ordering people out of the temple just to arrest someone who is not able to travel outside the temple to hear his charges due to a chronic illness. (The summons is to hear his charges, which are at this point merely accusations that he MAY have committed a crime.)

3.12 Is it really worth it to surround and close off the temple for 17 days, wasting millions in taxpayer's money. Based on the official estimates, it costs the government three million baht a day or a total of 51 million baht. The estimates given by media outlets is 5 million baht per day or a total of 85 million baht, or nearly 100 million baht already. We don't see this level of investment in the pursuit of terrorists or drug lords.

3.13 On 24 February 2017, the Prime Minister announced that if Most Ven. Dhammajayo turned himself in and allowed the state to manage Wat Phra Dhammakaya's affairs, he would revoke Article 44. Now, is it clear that the intent of this entire operation is to seize the assets of the temple? And who will let anyone come and seize the temple that one has built from one's faith?

3.14 Temple devotees adhere to the principle, "We won't fight, we won't flee, but we'll continue to do good deeds." We are not fighting with the government, but we are fighting against injustice.

4. Mr. Veerasak Futrakul, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, confirmed at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on 27 February 2017 that Thailand steadfastly promotes human rights. We oppose that statement, because the actions carried out by the authorities since 16 February 2017 reflect severe violations of human rights:

- 4.1 Prohibiting monks and civilians from entering the temple
- 4.2. Cutting off mobile signal and internet.
- 4.3. Establishing police and soldier-guarded checkpoints around the temple
- 4.4. Destroying surveillance cameras around the temple
- 4.5. Prohibiting meats and vegetables from being delivered into the temple
- 4.6. 10,000 monks and civilians are inside the temple but only 1,000 food boxes were allowed to be delivered
- 4.7. Establishing checkpoints that killed a ill person
- 4.8. Preventing local residents from doing business near the temple
- 4.9. Preventing children from going to school
- 4.10. Blocking routes surrounding the temple
- 4.11. Searching contents in monks' alms bowls
- 4.12. Prohibiting food received from alms offering from entering the temple
- 4.13. Using Article 44 on monks and innocent civilians
- 4.14. The authorities walked on the Maha Dhammakaya Cetiya, a sacred structure highly respected by the devotees.
- 4.15. Our monastic spokesman who normally addresses the media was accused of inciting unrest. Is this consistent with "adhering to and promoting human rights?"

On 28 February 2017, Ravida Sandasanee, a spokesperson for the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) made the following statement in Geneva: The OHCHR felt disappointed after being informed last week that the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, which was appointed by the junta, has suspended consideration of the draft law

that criminalizes officers who uses torture or is involved in enforced disappearances. This is in spite of the fact that the government has agreed to such legislation in May of last year.

A report on Wat Phra Dhammakaya by a reporter from Al Jazeera was blocked from being shared by the Thai government at 12.35 pm on 3 March 2017. The news reporter tweeted: "Our story on the situation at Wat Dhammakaya has been blocked by Thai government."

This led to conversations about freedom of press violations by the Thai government among people who follow world news. At 6.52 pm, the program was uploaded to the Youtube channel. After viewing the report, there was nothing in the content that appeared to be severe. It was simply an accurate report of the current situation. The report also posed a question for its viewers, "Is there a hidden agenda behind the use of Article 44, which grants authorities absolute power (similar to "martial law") that enables them to seize temple assets or take control of the temple?"

One thing we want to ask the people of Thailand: If this operation's aim was to lawfully arrest one person, and you (DSI) intend to do so with no hidden agenda, then why are you blocking access to international coverage that would hold you accountable for your actions?