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**Statement from Wat Phra Dhammakaya**  
**6 March 2017, 10.00 hrs.**

Due to the sensitive nature of the current situation, only a statement will be made and no questions taken. Anyone who has questions can submit them through your coordinator.

1. Today marks the 19th day of human rights violations at Wat Phra Dhammakaya and the government has spent an estimated 60-95 million Thai baht of taxpayer's money thus far. It would be more beneficial to spend this money on projects aimed at developing the nation, rather than using it to surround the temple, in response to "the failure to appear for a summons," a fine typically only 500 baht.

2. Yesterday, on Sunday, 5 March 2017, Wat Phra Dhammakaya organized the First Sunday of the Month Ceremony, a tradition that has been passed down for more than 50 years. There were over 10,000 monks, novices, and laypeople in attendance who traveled here from around the world. This demonstrates the utmost respect that they all have for Venerable Dhammajayo, who has devoted his life to teaching his devotees the three ways of making merit: through the practice of generosity, observance of precepts, and purification of the mind through meditation. Despite the large number of attendees and limited space, devotees happily meditated on sidewalks, under trees, and out in the open under their umbrellas.

The First Sunday of the Month Ceremony was held at Khun Yai Chand's Refectory. The event was broadcasted to the general public at the various gates throughout the temple, while those at Khlong Luang open market meditated by listening to a recorded audio of Venerable Dhammajayo. It is unfortunate, however, that authorities still won't permit monks, novices and the general public to go inside the temple to practice meditation. This is in spite the fact that this ceremony is part of a great tradition at the temple, which will not create disturbances that authorities may be concerned about.

3. Senior monks, domestic and abroad; world-renown individuals; and international Buddhist organizations have expressed great concern towards the situation affecting Wat Phra Dhammakaya. Many human rights organizations, four of which are monitoring the situation closely, and more than 30 international organizations have demanded the revocation of Article 44.

Ms. Nadia Tarzi has been in recent contact with us. She was a collaborator of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and the Dhammakaya Foundation on a project to protect the Mes Aynak, a Buddhist world heritage site in Afghanistan that was blasted to initiate a copper mine in 2014. News of the current situation reached Ms. Tarzi and she has expressed her growing concern. She has shared news of the situation to the international media. Although not much progress has been achieved, she will not abandon her efforts, and she sends her best wishes to Ven. Sanitwong and all the devotees here in Thailand.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the human rights group representatives for making a statement and expressing their concerns about the present situation at Wat Phra Dhammakaya. We want to reiterate that devotees practice mindfulness and calm. They will conduct themselves appropriately, to prevent any misunderstandings, and continue to observe the actions of the state authorities.

4. Lastly, we would like to invite DSI officials, soldiers and police officers to join us in the chanting of one round of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, a core Buddhist teaching. The chanting is approximately 15 minutes in duration. Please submit the total number of people interested in joining the chanting to a staff member or by phone at 02-831-1000. This way, all authorities who carry out their duties can make the most of their time and accrue merit for themselves, their family and nation.

Buddhist proverb:

*Hard to obtain in the human birth.*

*Difficult is the life of a mortal.*

*Difficult is listening to the true Dhamma.*

*Rare is the arising of the Buddha.*