



Statement from Wat Phra Dhammakaya
23 February 2017

1. In reference to the incident which took place near Boonraksa Medical Building, the authority to conduct searches belongs to the DSI (Department of Special Investigation), while the soldiers' sole duty is to guard the area outside the temple's premises. Even though there was no confrontation, entering the premise not for the purpose of searching is considered as creating distress for the monks and lay devotees residing in the temple. We do not wish to see an incident of this nature happening again.
2. At this time, it is our understanding that the 6 monks and approximately 20 lay devotees who were held in custody by the border patrol police have now been released. Thank you to all the officials who were involved.
3. The area of Khlong Luang Market has become the center for people to convene. Those who come are comprised of (a) devotees who are not permitted to enter the temple grounds; (b) the relatives of monks, novices, and lay devotees within the temple who have come to visit due to their concern over the aggressiveness of the state officials; and (c) Buddhists throughout the country who are worried that their fellow Buddhists are being harassed who made the trip to come to give their support due to their concern for Buddhism. These devotees are from the South, the North, the Central, and the Northeast of Thailand, as well as other countries.
4. We ask leaders of Thailand to understand that Thai citizens love peace and Buddhism. It is the national religion, and one that many international tourists expect and wish to experience. In 2016 the numbers of tourists doubled. Therefore, images of temple raids and violence against monks conflicts with what foreigners who love Thailand wish to see, which will have a negative impact on tourism in Thailand.
5. At this time, there have been various Human Rights groups reaching out to Wat Phra Dhammakaya to express concern, to extend a helping hand, and to closely observe the current situation, in the event there happens to be a human rights violation:
 - a. Amnesty International THAILAND, along with Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, made a statement requesting the revocation of Article 44 and to allow Wat Phra

Dhammakaya to enter the judicial process. (<http://www.tlhr2014.com/th/?p=3520>)
They will closely follow all developments pertaining to this case.

- b. Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) condemns the violation of human rights by the action of deploying thousands of military and police troops. They support and stand together with Wat Phra Dhammakaya in the righteous fight to champion freedom of religion, and they send encouragement to the temple hoping for normality in the near future.
 - c. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Research Analysis (GCR2P), which has consistently followed all the developments, is capable of distributing information to the media and NGO's in their network should something arise.
 - d. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) from the Philippines extends their help to Wat Phra Dhammakaya.
6. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) is currently in a good position in advocating for peace and harmony in the country. The use of Article 44 has been completed with the temple and the devotees respecting and adhering to it with full acknowledgement that the government has absolute power. Now we plead for the halt in the use of violence for the monks, novices, and devotees feel pressured. It has been onerous tasks to conduct religious celebrations and practices. Monks faced difficulty in their morning alms ritual, which is one of their routines. Food is scarce because no delivery of any food supply can enter the temple. Most importantly, meditation practices have been difficult due to the presence of thousands of periodically raiding officials, so the devotees have been continuously precocious, concerned, and in distrust with the authorities. Therefore, we plead for the cease of violence against monks, novices, and citizens.