

World Future Council protests against arrest of Thai Councillor Sulak Sivaraksa

Hamburg, November 17, 2008: “We sharply denounce the arrest of our Councillor Sulak Sivaraksa”, World Future Council (WFC) founder Jakob von Uexkuell said today in Hamburg. “Sulak Sivaraksa is one of Thailand’s most respected spiritual leaders. Arresting him on account of *lese majesty* is just another attempt to silence an inconvenient thinker and social critic.”

The 76-year-old advocate of socially engaged Buddhism and founder of numerous institutions and movements was arrested in Bangkok on November 6 in connection with a speech he delivered at Khon Kaen University last December. In the speech he critically commented on the high expense of King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s golden jubilee in 2006. The criminal charge of *lese majesty* carries up to 15 years prison sentence.

“Sivaraksa’s arrest is a blow against human rights and freedom of speech in Thailand”, von Uexkuell said. For months conflicts between the government and the opposition People’s Alliance for Democracy have been coming to a head in the country.

“Sivaraksa is a calm and respected spiritual leader who has peacefully advocated democratization of Thai society for decades.”

Democratization and commitment to a sustainable society for future generations are also key issues of the WFC. For this reason Sulak Sivaraksa was appointed to the Council. “The WFC will address the Thai government with a protest letter and call upon the government not to persecute Sulak Sivaraksa nor other regime opponents any more. In addition we will ask the King to commit himself personally to the protection of Sulak Sivaraksa, since it is known that the arrest has not been ordered by the King’s Court”, von Uexkuell said.

The WFC consists of 50 international experts who work together for climate protection, human rights, peace, and ethics in politics, economy and science. It promotes a safe, just, and sustainable future by informing globally about best policies and contributing to their implementation.

Sivaraksa was already arrested for *lese majesty* in 1984 and 1991. He was released on bail last week. Two other regime critics are in prison for insulting the monarchy.

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