

**INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
DR. CHAYAN VADDHANAPHUTI AND COLLEAGUES**

As representatives or heads of international academic organizations or academic programs, we view with deep concern the recent news that the Royal Thai Police may be about to charge Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti from Chiang Mai University along with four others - Chaipong Samnieng, Ph.D. Candidate and Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Chiang Mai University; Teeramon Buangam, M.A. Candidate, Faculty of Mass Communication, Chiang Mai University (and Editor, Prachaham News); Nontawat Machai, undergraduate student, Faculty of Mass Communication, Chiang Mai University; and Pakavadi Veerapaspong, independent writer and translator - with illegal political assembly.

The recent 13th International Thai Studies Conference (ICTS) and the 10th International Convention of Asia Scholars were major international academic events each attended by around 1300 participants, from 37 countries (ICTS) and over 50 countries (ICAS) respectively, that brought a global presence of scholars to Thailand. These conferences enjoy high international prestige and produce work of impressive and lasting significance. Dr. Chayan was entrusted by his university to facilitate the organization of these two major events, both of which received official support from the Governor of the Province of Chiang Mai. Dr. Chayan's organizational skills and intellectual leadership are celebrated worldwide, and were certainly in evidence on these occasions.

The presence of military officers at the ICTS conference apparently prompted some individuals to affirm that the conference was an academic forum and not a military barracks, a statement made in defense of the academic nature of the conference. We are sure you will agree that Chiang Mai's Convention and Exhibition Center is indeed not a military barracks. We believe that making this factual statement was a legitimate expression of their rights and liberties, as permitted under Article 4 of the 2017 Constitution; and one that in no way threatened Thailand's peace and order. We would therefore urge that all charges be dropped against Dr. Chayan and the other individuals named above, who clearly had no intention of violating any laws on political assembly.

Chiang Mai University and other universities in Thailand have hosted many international academic conferences, each important not only for the opportunities for scholars to share current research, but also for generating economic revenue for Chiang Mai and other hosting provinces. Holding such international conferences is a vital component if Thailand is to reach the stated goal in its "Thailand 4.0" plans of ensuring that at least 5 Thai universities are ranked among the world's top 100 higher education institutions within the next 20 years. We hope, too, that Thailand will continue to welcome serious scholars of all disciplinary inclinations and to benefit from the global contributions of Thailand's own most important academics – of whom, without question, Dr. Chayan is an outstanding representative.

Issued on behalf of the following:

- International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden, The Netherlands
Dr. Nira Wickramasinghe, Chair of the Board
Dr. Philippe Peycam, Director
- International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS)
Dr Philippe Peycam, International Council Chair
Dr. Paul van der Velde, Secretary
- Association for Asian Studies (AAS)
Dr. Katherine A. Bowie, President
(AAS is an international academic association with more than 7000 members)
- Committee of the Thai Studies Program, Asia Center, Harvard University
Dr. Michael Herzfeld, Director
- New York Southeast Asia Network (NYSEAN)
Dr. Duncan McCargo, Co-Founder
- Humanities Across Borders, Asia and Africa in the World (HaB) program
Dr. Aarti Kawlra, Academic Director
(HaB is a consortium of 22 universities and institutes in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America)
- Southeast Asian Neighborhood Network (SEANNET)
Dr. Rita Padawangi, Co-Director
Dr. Paul Rabé, Co-Director
- The Board of the European Association for Southeast Asian Studies (EuroSEAS)
Dr. Silvia Vignato, President
- The Board of the Association of Southeast Asian Studies (ASEAS) (United Kingdom)
Dr. Deirdre McKay, Chair

20 August 2017