



Buddhist Association of the United States

Chuang Yen Monastery
2020 Route 301
Carmel, NY 10512-3426 – U.S.A.

5 August 2025

To the relevant authorities of the Government of Thailand and the Thai Army:

I am writing this statement on behalf of Netiwit Chotiphatpaisal (a Harvard Divinity School Buddhist Ministry Fellow 2025-2026) to support his claim for conscientious objector status in his refusal to serve in the Thai military.

I am an American Buddhist monk (bhikkhu), ordained in Sri Lanka in 1972. I am well known as a Buddhist scholar and as a translator of Buddhist texts from Pali to English. My translations include the entire Majjhima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya, and Anguttara Nikaya, as well as works on the five precepts and the noble eightfold path.

Mr. Chotiphatpaisal has confirmed to me that he is a devoted Buddhist who has made a strong commitment to observe the Buddhist precepts and the ethical values of the Buddha Dhamma. As you probably know, the first of the five lay precepts requires abstinence from the destruction of life. The full statement of the first training rule states (Anguttara Nikaya, Book of Tens, no. 176): "Here, a disciple, having abandoned the destruction of life, abstains from the destruction of life. With the rod and weapon laid aside, conscientious and kindly, he dwells compassionate toward all living beings."

One strongly committed to observance of this precept would find it contrary to his vows to participate in military service where, even if he does not engage in actual warfare, he will be trained in the methods of taking life.

Further, Buddhist ethics extols the virtues of lovingkindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). *Mettā* means that one wishes for all beings to be well, happy, and safe, "just as a mother would care for her only son" (the Metta Sutta). *Karuṇā* or compassion means that one's heart resonates with the suffering of others and one refuses any actions that bring suffering to others.

Since Mr. Chotiphatpaisal follows the Buddhist precepts and seeks to live in a way guided by the ideals of universal kindness and compassion, his conscientious objection

to serving in the military should be respected and he should be exempted from military service.

I thank you for attending to this request.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bhikkhu Bodhi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

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