

# **Chulalongkorn University attempt to victimise Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn**

Monday 2 July 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 25 June 2007).

**In the wake of last year's Thai military coup Chula University is seeking to victimize a leading democracy activist. Find below details of the case and a model letter which people can use and adapt in support of Associate Prof Giles Ji Ungpakorn in his case against the university.**

Chulalongkorn University authorities are attempting to victimise the anti-military junta academic, Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn.

Earlier this year Chulalongkorn University authorities ordered the university bookshop to refuse to sell Professor Ungpakorn's book "A Coup for the Rich". The book, by the Political Science Professor, criticised the military coup and the destruction of democracy in Thailand. Professor Ungpakorn made repeated attempts to obtain an explanation from the university authorities about why they banned the sale of this book. Up to this day the university has never provided Professor Ungpakorn with any written explanation. The book is, however, on sale at Thammasart University bookshop. This act of censorship, lead to Professor Ungpakorn's complaint to the National Human Rights Commission that Chulalongkorn authorities had stifled academic freedom. The Commision is currently looking into the case. It should be noted that many of the Chulalongkorn university's officials, including the Rector and various Faculty Deans and academics are collaborating with the junta and supporting the coup. Academics have been appointed to junta bodies, including the unelected parliament.

Therefore the recent attempt by Vice Rector Professor Kua Wongbunsin to lodge a complaint against Professor Ungpakorn for confronting him in order to gain an explanation about the refusal to sell his book, can be seen as a crude political move to attempt to discipline the anti-coup academic. Professor Kua is directly responsible for overseeing the university bookshop. Yet he has never taken responsibility for censoring "A Coup for the Rich". He has never offered an official explanation to the author. He accused the author of having a "hidden agenda" in trying to get the university bookshop to sell the book and he has belittled the National Human Rights Commission.

A Kangaroo Court was set up by the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Dr Jarus Suwannamala on the 8<sup>th</sup> May in order to "investigate" Professor Ungpakorn's behaviour towards Professor Kua Wongbunsin. The setting up of this investigation was kept secret and Professor Ungpakorn was totally unaware of any charges against him or of any investigation until he was asked to meet with retired Professor Prasit Sawasdyart on 21<sup>st</sup> June. No reason was given for the meeting in advance and Professor Ungpakorn was not given the chance to prepare his defence until confronted with the charges by Professor Prasit Sawasdyart. No documents detailing the charges have been given to Professor Ungpakorn. The methods used by this so-called investigation committee do not conform with basic standards of justice and transparency. Clearly this is a case of crude political

victimisation.

This serious attack against academic freedom should also be seen in the light of attempts by the university authorities, in collaboration with the junta, to introduce free-market corporatisation into the university system. Professor Ungpakorn is a strong opponent of such corporatisation. Vice Rector Kua Wongbunsin is an ardent advocate of corporatisation.

All those who are concerned about freedom and democracy in Thailand should send letters of protest to the Rector of Chulalongkorn University and to the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University.

Letters should be sent to the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University and the Rector, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.

E-mails can also be sent to:

charas.su chula.ac.th

suchada.ki chula.ac.th

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### **Letter of Concern regarding the disciplinary charges against Associate Giles Ji Ungpakorn**

We, the undersigned, are very concerned to hear that The Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, has set up a disciplinary committee to consider charges against the pro-democracy academic Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn. The charges are worrying because:

1. Thailand is under the rule of a military dictatorship and Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn is a prominent critic of this dictatorship.
2. Chulalongkorn University bookshop is refusing to sell Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn's academic book titled "A Coup for the Rich".
3. The disciplinary committee was set up without informing Associate Professor Giles Ji Ungpakorn. He was asked to meet a retired academic who turned out to be heading the committee. The defendant has therefore not been given the basic right to prepare his case in advance or to be properly informed of the charges against him.

We sincerely hope that the university will refrain from taking any action against Associate Professor Ungpakorn for political reasons and that basic international standards of justice are applied in any hearings involving him.

Yours sincerely,

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**P.S.**

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