



Regarding Harassment and Defamation

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It is with sadness and compassion that we write in relation to a very small group of people who have formed and felt it necessary to spend their time directly harassing Pine Forest Sangha and by spreading malicious and defamatory gossip.

This group, who act and write anonymously are unwilling to reveal their identity or to express any concerns or problems with the monastery in an open, professional and civil manner. So far, it would appear that their intention is only to damage or harm the Sangha by creating and spreading untruthful and slanderous speech.

We have a good idea as to the identity of the perpetrators concerned, who are unable to accept the choices made by individuals within our community to live a simple and spiritual life. We cannot disclose the suspected identities of these people until such time as our investigations into who they are are complete. This campaign of persecution has been ongoing for a few years to the point where we feel the individuals in question have become harmful to themselves and harmful to others. Certain members of this group have previously been issued with warnings of harassment, arrested for assault and charged by the police for harassment.

We are writing because it has been brought to our attention that this group has published various materials in an attempt to influence members of the Sangha or visitors that have participated in retreats. Their intention here is to discredit and raise doubts over the individuals' experience and encourage the individual to contact them at anonymous email addresses and to join in with their slanderous campaign. Unfortunately, we are aware of one example where they have had at least partial success. Examples of some of the misleading material or gossip that they have produced are as follows:

- That the monks at Pine Forest Sangha are in fact international terrorists and con men with many different identities that they use in different countries to propagate their deception, that they are not monks, that they are part of a much larger organization attempting to

brainwash people by creating a cult.

- That everyone who visits Pine Forest Sangha is forced to take refuge and vows, is forced to pledge properties and leave their families and is forced to undertake a program of food and sleep deprivation in order to make them more susceptible to brainwashing.

- That the monks at Pine Forest Sangha are committing 'public deception' and fraud and are financially and spiritually deceiving people, that they embezzle money for their own personal gain in order to live a lavish and luxurious life style.

In the event you come across any defamatory material, we would like to advise firstly that you do not disclose your personal information by responding to it and secondly we would ask you to be so kind as to contact Pine Forest Sangha who can then forward the information to the police and charity advisors who are investigating this matter

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