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## **Floating Islands Leader Urges Leniency for Offshore Couple**

### ***Seasteaders Offers to Help Thailand With Rising Sea Levels***

**San Francisco, April 22, 2019** -- The chairman of the Seasteading Institute (<https://www.seasteading.org/>) Patri Friedman, urged compassion for a couple whose floating home was seized last week by the Thailand government, declaring that “their actions were no threat to Thai sovereignty” and “our organization works with governments and not against them”.

American Chad Elwartowski and his Thai partner Nadia Supranee Thepdet moved earlier this year to an ocean platform built by a group inspired by the “seasteading” movement. The couple was not aboard when the Thai navy boarded the platform. Thai authorities revoked the visa of Chad, an early bitcoin investor, and charged him and his partner with violating Thai sovereignty by floating the cabin 14 nautical miles off the west coast of the Thai island of Phuket.

Friedman said he “was shocked and saddened last week by media reports that this couple was charged with treason – punishable in Thailand by death or life imprisonment – simply because no one had filed paperwork for the floating home. This is like charging someone with a capital crime for not registering their car.”

He added “While our non-profit Seasteading Institute has no involvement with building or launching projects like this one, we advocate for the rights of seasteaders worldwide. For Chad and Nadia, it was the realization of a romantic dream to live openly and peacefully on the ocean...I am deeply relieved to see that officials are considering dropping the death penalty.”

Friedman, grandson of Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, suggested instead that “Thai authorities should follow the lead of the United Nations, who

recommend floating cities be part of the global community's new arsenal of tools in the fight against climate change.”

Using statistics from a recent United Nations High-Level conference on Sustainable Floating Cities in New York in early April<sup>1</sup>, Friedman pointed to the Thai capital: “Seasteading concepts can help cities like Bangkok which are increasingly at risk of flooding. Some parts of the city are sinking by around two centimetres a year, while sea levels in the Gulf of Thailand are rising.”

He concluded that “we look forward to future partnerships with states, NGOs, and communities to test new ideas and solutions for all. We would be honored and delighted to share our research with the Thai government, as sustainable floating cities are a key tool to address climate change and other 21st century challenges.”

## **About The Seasteading Institute**

The Seasteading Institute (TSI) is a United States 501(c)3 non-profit. Our mission is to enable seasteading communities – floating cities – where pioneers can peacefully test new laws and political systems and inspire change in governments around the world. We work on this mission through research and education with individuals, organizations, and governments. Our current main initiative is sustainable seasteading through facilitating the creation of the first floating city.

As a non-profit organization dedicated to the entire seasteading movement, our role is not to build seasteads, but to empower others to do so. Our [Floating City Project](#) envisions a model wherein a nation and a company will establish a public-private partnership to construct and operate a floating city with significant legal autonomy that functions as an integrated and efficient product to meet the needs of citizens. This project builds on over a decade of engineering and legal research, political and maritime industry diplomacy, and building a community of aspiring seasteaders.

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<sup>1</sup> “Sustainable Floating Cities Can Offer Solutions to Climate Change Threats Facing Urban Areas, Deputy Secretary-General Tells First High-Level Meeting” (2019, April 3). United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, DSG/SM/1269-ENV/DEV/1936-HAB/248. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/dsgsm1269.doc.htm>

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## Seasteading Institute Founder's Full Statement On Peaceful Platform Near Thailand

I founded The Seasteading Institute in 2008 to enable seasteading communities – floating cities – where pioneers can peacefully test new laws and political systems and inspire change in governments around the world. Our [decade of legal research](#)<sup>2</sup> advocates for a variety of strategies within current international law, such as [flagged vessels](#)<sup>3</sup>, and [partnering with innovative and progressive governments](#)<sup>4</sup>.

A few months ago, a diverse group of activists, engineers, and writers, aided by Thai shipyards, built and launched a platform from Thailand. It was anchored outside territorial waters, as verified by GPS records. This remarkable achievement in affordable ocean technology was done in partnership with Thai shipyards and could help humanity adapt to rising sea levels.

The platform's first two occupants were a cosmopolitan couple, Chad Elwartowski of America and Nadia Supranee Thepdet of Thailand. For Chad and Nadia, it was the realization of a romantic dream to live openly and peacefully on the ocean, where they [released videos of their adventure](#)<sup>5</sup>.

I was shocked and saddened last week [by media reports that this couple was charged with treason](#)<sup>6</sup> – punishable in Thailand by death or life imprisonment – simply because no one had filed paperwork for the floating home. This is like charging someone with a capital crime for not registering their car.

While our non-profit Seasteading Institute has no involvement with building or launching projects like this one, we advocate for the rights of seasteaders worldwide. I urge compassion for these two brave seasteaders, as their actions were no threat to Thai sovereignty. I am deeply relieved to see [that officials are considering dropping the death penalty](#)<sup>7</sup>. This is in Thailand's best

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<sup>2</sup> Seasteading Institute Law and Policy page. Retrieved from <https://www.seasteading.org/law-and-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> Hickman, S. (2012). Flagging options for Seasteading projects. *Sunnyvale: Seasteading Institute*.

<sup>4</sup> Ives, M. (2017, January 27). As Climate Change Accelerates, Floating Cities Look Like Less of a Pipe Dream. *New York Times*. Retrieved from [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/world/australia/climate-change-floating-islands.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/world/australia/climate-change-floating-islands.html?_r=0)

<sup>5</sup> <https://ocean.builders/videos/>

<sup>6</sup> Allen, N. (2019, April 19). US couple could face death penalty after Bangkok claims 'seastead' lies within Thai waters. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/04/18/us-couple-could-face-death-penalty-bangkok-claims-sea-ho-me-lies/>

<sup>7</sup> "Police open door to no death penalty charge over Phuket seastead case" 2019, April 19. *The Phuket News*. Retrieved from

interests, as by threatening a harmless couple with death for what was at most a minor infraction, Thailand would only be threatening their own tourism industry.

Instead, Thai authorities should follow the lead of the United Nations, [who recommend floating cities be part of the global community's new arsenal of tools in the fight against climate change](#)<sup>8</sup>. Seasteading concepts can help cities like Bangkok which are increasingly at risk of flooding. Some parts of the city are sinking by around two centimetres a year, while sea levels in the Gulf of Thailand are rising.

Our mission is to help humanity by settling the blue frontier, and so our organization works with governments, not against them. We support following international and local laws and look forward to future partnerships with states, NGOs, and communities to test new ideas and solutions for all. We would be honored and delighted to share our research with the Thai government.

While we don't have enough specifics on this incident to comment on the various legal claims, we do know the [United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea](#)<sup>9</sup>. Beyond territorial waters, the world's oceans are the "common heritage of humanity", not some unclaimed free-for-all. But neither should they be a death sentence.

Rather, sustainable floating cities are a key tool to address climate change and other 21st century challenges. Please join me in spreading the message that humanity needs its seasteaders in action – not in jail, in hiding, or in the grave.

Patri Friedman,  
Founder and Chairman of the Board,  
The Seasteading Institute  
San Francisco, California, April 22, 2019.

P.s. [Some news reports have erroneously stated](#)<sup>10</sup> that our organization directly represents those involved. We wish to clarify that, to best support seasteading in general, **we don't represent or speak on behalf of any particular individual, including Chad or Nadia.**

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<https://www.thephuketnews.com/police-open-door-to-no-death-penalty-charge-over-phuket-seastead-case-71151.php>

<sup>8</sup> "Sustainable Floating Cities Can Offer Solutions to Climate Change Threats Facing Urban Areas, Deputy Secretary-General Tells First High-Level Meeting" (2019, April 3). United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, DSG/SM/1269-ENV/DEV/1936-HAB/248. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/dsgsm1269.doc.htm>

<sup>9</sup> "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982", Last updated 28 March 2018, retrieve from [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_convention.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Witsil, F (2019, April 19). Indiana woman fears for her brother, a Bitcoin entrepreneur wanted by the Thai government. *Indianapolis Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2019/04/19/noblesville-woman-fears-brother-bitcoin-investor-being-sought-royal-thai-navy/3524467002/>

Additionally, while we publish general research on international law for educational purposes, local regulations, precedents, and interpretations vary around the world. **We do not, and cannot, provide legal advice or representation, and recommend with the utmost vigor that anyone attempting anything like seasteading obtain independent legal counsel.**

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