

German MP questions Foreign Minister about Thai King's status in Bavaria - "Thai politics must not be conducted from German territory"

Tuesday 13 October 2020, by [MAAS Heiko](#), [SCHMIDT Frithjof](#) (Date first published: 10 October 2020).

An MP from Germany's Green Party has questioned the German Foreign Ministry about its position towards the protests in Thailand and Thai King's status in Bavaria. The Foreign Minister insists that Thai politics must not be conducted from German territory.

On 7 October 2020, Germany, Dr Frithjof Schmidt, an MP from Green Party, asked Foreign Minister Heiko Maas about possible EU economic sanctions against the military government that has interrupted the Thai democratization process.

Mass said that economic sanctions to freeze free trade negotiations were possible if the Thai government still persisted in their actions but discussions with Thailand should be held first.

The coup in 2014 led the EU to freeze contacts until Thailand returned to democracy. After the 2019 general election, free trade talks were resumed even though Thailand was still under military rule and human rights violations continued.

Schmidt also raised concerns about the Thai King's status in Bavaria, claiming that the King had directed politics and had issued political orders from German territory, which he believed was illegal.

Mass insisted "We have made it clear that policy affecting the country of Thailand does not have to be taken from German soil. ... But it is not in line with the view of the German Federal Government that ... guests in our country carry out their state business from here; we would always like to counteract this clearly."

As repeatedly reported in the media, the Thai King has been living in a villa and a hotel in Bavaria, Germany, with occasional day-long visits to Thailand for important royal events. However, he is now facing protests organized by Thai residents in front of his villa along with the protests in Thailand.

The King's extended stay in Germany has stirred up public opinion even though the lèse majesté law criminalizes criticism of the King, Queen, Heir Apparent and Regent. The student-led democratic movement has stepped up with 10 demands for monarchy reform, claiming to put the monarchy in line with democratic values.

Below is a translation from German of the question and response between Dr Frithjof Schmidt and Heiko Maas:

Dr Frithjof Schmidt

Minister, in Thailand tens of thousands of people are currently demonstrating for more democracy and against the military junta. The military junta had simply banned the main opposition party after the elections. The European Union some time ago suspended negotiations on a free trade agreement with Thailand because of the junta's behaviour. Following the announcement of elections, negotiations were resumed in order to promote this process of return to democracy.

Are you prepared to work now in this situation in the European Council to freeze these negotiations again as long as the junta continues to block the path to democracy in Thailand?

Heiko Maas: foreign minister

I do indeed think that this is an option that we are keeping open within the European Union. I think it is right to have a dialogue on this once again with the Thai side. We also have the opportunity because, as I believe, there is a great Thai interest in an agreement to this end, which is used as a means of exerting pressure. However, I would not like to rule out the possibility that, because of the behaviour that we have to take note of there at the moment, we can take such a step.

Dr Frithjof Schmidt

I have one more inquiry. The Thai king stays often and for a long time in Germany; he owns a villa here. That is in order. But he also conducts direct politics from Germany. Among other things, he has publicly banned his sister from running as the leading candidate for the main opposition party.

Why has the Federal Government tolerated for months this extremely unusual and, in my opinion, illegal behaviour by a foreign head of state to conduct politics from German soil?

Heiko Maas

We have made it clear that policy affecting the country of Thailand does not have to be taken from German soil. Also, I believe that there are many bizarre reports on what is taking place. But it is not in line with the view of the German Federal Government that – and this is different from what we had with Mr Navalny – guests in our country carry out their state business from here; we would always like to counteract this clearly.

P.S.

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