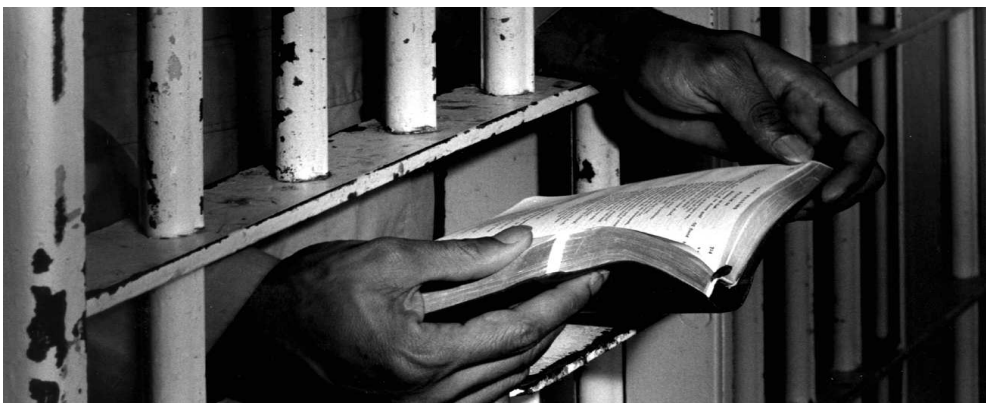




Vietnam Religious Freedom Roundtable

April 11th, 2014



Office of the Honourable Senator Thanh Hai Ngo

The Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo

SENATE



CANADA

SÉNAT

L'hon Thanh Hai Ngo

AGENDA

**Vietnam Religious Freedom Roundtable
Ottawa, Parliament Hill, Center Block, Room 160-S, Aboriginal Room
Friday, April 11th, 2014
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:30 - 2:00 | Registration and Refreshments |
| 2:00 - 2:05 | Welcome address from the Honourable Senator Thanh Hai Ngo |
| 2:05 - 2:10 | Mrs. Lois Brown, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development |
| 2:10 - 2:15 | The Honourable David W. Kilgour, former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and State Secretary for Asia and the Pacific |
| 2:15 - 2:20 | Mr. Matthew Mayer, Deputy Director and Representative of the Office of Religious Freedom |
| 2:20 - 2:25 | General greeting by Phat Nguyen on behalf of the Vietnamese Community |
| 2:25 - 2:30 | Statement from the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam |
| 2:30 - 2:40 | Statement from the Catholic Church of Vietnam delegation |
| 2:40 - 2:50 | Statement from the Cao Dai of Vietnam delegation |
| 2:50 - 3:00 | Statement from the Hoa Hao Buddhism of Vietnam delegation |
| 3:00 - 3:10 | Statement from the Montagnard Delegations <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Statement from the Montagnard Christian Organization▪ Statement from the Montagnard Human Rights Organization |
| 3:10 - 3:15 | Statement from the Lay Buddhist delegation |
| 3:15 - 3:50 | Discussion and Questions |
| 3:50 - 4:00 | Final remarks and Group pictures |
| 4:00 - 4:30 | Visit to Senator Ngo's office |
| 5:00 - 6:30 | Optional Dinner and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vietnam Palace, 819 Somerset St W, Ottawa, ON K1R 6R5. |

The Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo

SENATE



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L'hon Thanh Hai Ngo

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The Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo

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L'hon Thanh Hai Ngo

Message from the Senator

Countless Vietnamese risked their lives to escape Communist persecution after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Many were forced to flee and leave their lives and homeland behind in pursuit of freedom from the authoritarian regime. Those who stayed behind were often victims of persecution, and in the years following the war, thousands of Vietnamese were executed or were sent to prisons or re-education camps. Canada was among the first countries to welcome Vietnamese refugees with open arms. Since the end of the war, Vietnam's one-party Communist regime continues to suppress dissent, persecute religious minorities and hold its people under an authoritarian rule that forces individuals to seek refuge in other parts of the world.

This Roundtable discussion on Freedom of Religion in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam will tackle the issues related to discrimination based on religion. Religious groups in Vietnam are facing ongoing systematic discrimination based on their beliefs and personal views, resulting in fundamental violations of international human rights standards. Addressing this lack of religious freedom together is a step towards advocating for a critical right to individuals, and builds a block towards improving other freedoms and encouraging democracy. As Canadians, we treasure such freedoms and rights, and value the pluralism and tolerance that define our society. I therefore extend a warm invitation to all participants, as we engage in this dialogue to discuss these fundamental human rights issues with key federal government officials and important community and religious leaders where we will have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of religious minorities in Vietnam.

As Canada's first senator originally from Vietnam, it is an honour for me to continue to raise awareness about ongoing human rights violations and to advocate for those brave enough to risk speaking out against the injustices in Vietnam. I am proud to act for the furtherance of peace, human rights and democracy in a region that cries out for freedom. We cannot allow our progress in advancing freedom become overshadowed by strict controls on speech and political freedoms.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thanh Hai Ngo', written over a horizontal line.

Senator Thanh Hai Ngo





April 8, 2014

Vietnam Religious Freedom Roundtable

I would like to thank Senator Thanh Hai Ngo for organizing this important roundtable discussion on freedom of religion in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Our government remains concerned regarding civil, political, and human rights situation in Vietnam. We will continue to ensure that freedom of religion or belief, democracy, and human rights are respected around the world.

Vietnam is a multi-faith society, encompassing Buddhists, Protestants, Muslims, Catholics and animist groups. The Vietnamese government maintains a prominent role overseeing religions, and religious activities still require state approval. While more religious groups are being authorized to practice their faith, lack of recognition for congregations and unapproved “house churches”, delays in processing registrations and reports of intimidation and forced renunciation are ongoing concerns.

The implementation of Decree 92 to the 2004 Ordinance on Religion and Belief (currently under review by the Vietnamese government and expecting approval in 2015), the primary document governing religious practice in Vietnam, has led to more restrictions on religion, as all religious activities now fall under “state management.” Protestant groups, in particular, argue that the Decree could be interpreted differently at provincial and grass-roots levels, further complicating their ability to register as legal religious groups potentially making them subject to harassment. Notably, Decree 92 treats religious groups as a potential threat to “national security” allowing authorities a wide latitude to control or ban religious activities or entities.

On November 2011, I joined the Governor General on Canada’s first state visit to Vietnam. On February 2013, I have traveled to Vietnam where I have met with Father Van Ly who was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for his participation in pro-democracy movements. During my visit I have called on the Vietnamese authorities to respect all their international human rights obligations which include freedom of expression.

Canada remains committed to improving the state of religious freedom in Vietnam and will continue to engage local religious communities and the Vietnamese government to do so. Our Missions abroad, as well as the Office of Religious Freedom, continue to monitor the situation in Vietnam closely and will pursue avenues of action when available and appropriate.

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend this roundtable as a result of prior commitments. I hope your discussion on religious freedom and fundamental human rights in Vietnam is a meaningful one. I look forward to hearing further about this discussion.

Sincerely,

Hon. Deepak Obhrai



As Canada's former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and State Secretary for Asia and the Pacific I look forward to discussing issues of religious freedom. The term 'religious persecution' means any violation of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion, as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In Canada, we have the right to exercise religious freedom, regardless of our beliefs. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that everyone has the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion. This freedom to worship, or the liberty to choose not to worship, is one of the cornerstones of Canada's appeal to many people from other lands who come to Canada to pursue more fulfilled lives.

Canada is not alone in this commitment. Religious freedom is a universal value, and almost all of the world's nations have signed some sort of international agreement committing them to respect – at least in theory - individual freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Many people, however, in many lands, continue to suffer for the belief or practice of their faith, and many governments refuse to recognize or protect this natural and universal right.

I look forward to participating in this roundtable discussion on religious freedom.

The Honourable David Kilgour
Former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
and State Secretary for Asia and the Pacific



As Canada's Ambassador for Religious Freedom, I extend warm congratulations to Senator Thanh Hai Ngo for organizing this important roundtable discussion on Vietnam. Let me also take this opportunity to offer greetings to all the participants.

I look forward to working with you and indeed all those who are committed to defending freedom of religion in Vietnam and wherever this right is threatened around the world.

Canada has made the promotion and protection of religious freedom a foreign policy priority. The Office of Religious Freedom is focused on protecting and advocating on behalf of religious communities under threat; opposing religious hatred; and, promoting abroad the Canadian values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Canada, by its very pluralist and multicultural nature, is well-positioned to promote freedom of religion. Canada is defined by its tolerance, peace and security; our diversity gives us a unique perspective on the world and motivates us in the defence and promotion of religious freedom abroad

I look forward to working with all relevant faith communities to promote and defend freedom of religion in Vietnam in a way that brings peace to our communities and to our world.

Please accept my sincere best wishes for a successful event and profitable discussions.

Dr. Andrew P. W. Bennett
Ambassador
Office of Religious Freedom
OTTAWA, April 4, 2014

Overview of Religious Freedom in Vietnam

The human rights situation in Vietnam remains dire. As Human Rights Watch states in its 2013 countries report, Vietnam suppresses nearly every human right, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion. In fact, Vietnam has taken steps backwards on human rights. Law enforcement officials often carry out torture and other abuses at each stage of a dissident's arrest, detention, and imprisonment, with the harshest abuses taking place during pre-trial detention.

The freedom of religion could be argued as one of the most fundamental human rights. Religious freedom creates conditions for peace, democratization and the development of other human rights. Through pursuing this freedom, individuals are intrinsically exercising freedoms of belief or non-belief, expression, assembly and association. A lack of religious freedom often creates socio-economic discrimination. It reduces citizens' ability to peacefully associate and to become agents for structural change; often this creates conditions of violent religious persecution, extremism or terrorism. Therefore religious freedom should be seen not only as a right that is critical to individuals, but also as a building block for other freedoms—the building blocks of democracy.

The Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) continues to tighten control over all religious activities. The government severely restricts independent religious practices while repressing individuals and religious groups they view as challenges to its legitimacy. State authorities continue to imprison and detain individuals for their religious activity and freedom advocacy. Independent religious practices remain heavily repressed through a specialized task force aimed at controlling religious groups called Công An Tôn Giáo.¹ Legal protections for government-approved religious organizations are often subject to arbitrary and discriminatory interpretations based on political factors. Followers of religious minority groups face systematic discrimination, constant intimidation and intense pressure to renounce their faith. They are often forced to join to the religions the VCP deems to be acceptable and recognized by the State.² In other words, the VCP does not force people to convert to acceptable or recognized religions; they force people to join religious organizations under the VCP's control. For example, you can be Buddhist, but if you're part of the UBCV, you're an outlaw.

Vietnam is home to 13 recognized religions and 36 religious organizations licensed by the State, with 24 million followers (27% of the total population). This is composed of 83,000 dignitaries and 25,000 worshipping sites according to the Government's Committee for Religious Affairs.³ However, Vietnam's population of 89 million is made up of over 54 ethnic communities with unique religious, linguistic and cultural characteristics and identities.⁴ Under Vietnam's existing

¹ David Anderson, MP, "Vietnamese Officials Destroy Two New Church Buildings," Special to Compass Direct News, <http://www.davidanderson.ca/right-to-freedom-of-religion/vietnamese-officials-destroy-two-new-churchbuildings?tpid=3639>

² Ibid.

³ "Nation Respects Religious Freedoms," *Vietnam News*, 27 February 2013, <http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/236759/nation-respects-religious-freedom.html>

⁴ Gay McDougall, "Report of the Independent Expert on Minority, Mission to Vietnam" Human Rights Documents, A/HRC/16/45/Add.2

decrees on religion, most of these religious and ethnic groups will never be legally recognized by the VCP. In provinces across the country, members of unrecognized groups are often the subject to harassment by local State officials.

The VCP has sought to place limits on the increase of religious activities and associations. On January 1, 2013, an amendment was passed on the Operational Guideline for Vietnam's highest law on religion, the 2004 Ordinance on Religion and Belief. Specifically, the new Decree (Decree 92) makes the process of legally recognizing a religion more constrained, meaning legal recognition would take at least 23 years.⁵ Despite these restrictions on religious freedom and growth, the Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religions have all reported an increase in religious activity and observance. As Figure 2 indicates, official statistics are often difficult to interpret and record due to the lack of transparency within the State Departments.

Overall, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has failed to foster the establishment of a genuinely democratic system, and respect for internationally recognized human rights, including the right to own property, right to political speech/expressions, right to freely practice any religion or belief, and the right to life. Instead of improving its human rights record, Vietnam has increased its repression of democratic ideals. Its repression and aggression has been the greatest against religious institutions and freedom of expression and press. The following are summaries of religious groups who have undergone discrimination in Vietnam.

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV)

The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is the largest and oldest religious community in Vietnam. For the past three decades, the Communist hierarchy has systematically targeted UBCV, detaining and harassing Buddhist monks and nuns. Religious gathering and festival such as the Buddha birthday are routinely disbanded by police.

In March 2013, Buddhist youth leader Le Cong Cau was interrogated intensively for three days by Security Police in Hue because he posted articles on the Internet calling for the legalization of the UBCV. Police said that by advocating for the UBCV rather than the State-Sponsored Vietnam Buddhist Church (VBC), he was sowing divisions between religious followers an offense punishable by up to 15 years in prison under Article 87 of the Vietnamese Criminal Code.

The most tragic victim of Vietnam's repression is the UBCV Patriarch Thich Quang Do who is 85, and currently under house arrest at the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon. He has been detained almost without interruption since 1982. Denied freedom of movement and citizenship rights, forbidden even to preach in his Monastery and under constant police surveillance, this revered dissident and Nobel Peace Prize nominee remains a symbol of the movement for democracy, and continues to challenge the government on religious freedom and human rights⁶.

⁵ "Vietnam's New Religion Decree Termed a Step Backward," *Morning Star News*, 24 January 2013
<http://morningstarnews.org/2013/01/vietnams-new-religion-decree-termed-a-step-backward/>

⁶ Ibid

Catholic Church

In Vietnam, the Church is often not free to engage in traditional activities. For example, religious events, retreats, conferences, involving local, national or international religious groups must be approved by the government. The communist party uses delaying tactics when the Church submits applications for repairing or remodeling Church land. Government officials usually come up with reasons to deny parishes or religious orders' requests for construction permits that would meet their needs.

Father Pham Minh Trieu, pastor of Bao Long parish in Nam Dinh, has tried for 15 years in vain to apply for a permit to renovate the parish church. The local government would do anything to hinder the repair or building project of the church as proposed by the parishioners. Father Trieu also reported that as the parishioners were digging a pond and building a monument of Our Lady in the front yard of their church, police and soldiers were sent out to harass and prevent them from doing so.

Catholic Parishioner Tran Thanh Tien was among 62 people in his village who were arrested and severely beaten by police in May 2010. He participated in a funeral procession and protested in a cemetery located on disputed land in Da Nang. Police shocked him with an electric baton and beat him on his chest and underarms from seven hours. When he lost consciousness, they threw soapy water on him. They hit him on his back with hardened plastic kitchen tools. They hung him by his handcuffed wrist from the window ledge for an afternoon, beating him as he hung there. After his release, when he refused to report on other villagers, police beat him again.

*"There were two men beating me, one on each side. They boxed ears, one ear then the other. They hit me with their fists, and slapped me. They beat me so hard that the inside of my body still hurts today." "Before this happened to me, I never heard of any torture in police stations before this. Nobody dares to speak about it. I realized that people who are tortured by the police don't dare speak about it"*⁷.

Hoa Hao

Hoa Hao followers constitute 1.5 to 3 percent of the population. Authorities in An Giang and Dong Thap provinces continued to harass and abuse.

Duong Thi Tron was arrested under Article 245 of the Penal Code for creating public disorder. As an active member of the independent Hoa Hao Buddhist Church in Dong Thap province she and her husband were arrested and sentenced to prison for their participation in hunger strikes and other protests against persecution of the Hoa Hao.

Nguyen Van Lia age 74 was sentenced and charged under Article 258 of the Penal Code for abusing democratic freedoms that infringe upon the interests of the State. As the chairman of the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church, he was arrested after meeting with foreign diplomats in 2009 and

⁷ <http://www.stoptorture-vn.org/voices-survivors-of-torture.html>

2010 to brief them on persecution of the Hoa Hao. He suffers from high blood pressure, has lost most of his hearing, and has several broken ribs from past injuries⁸.

Cao Dai

On May 5th 2012, numerous local police along with reporters threatened and assaulted worshipers at a Cao Dai Temple in Long An province. The government had assigned a new leader to that temple. Members of the temple rejected the new leader's authority. According to one worshiper, police asked many people to leave, saying the temple belonged to a state-recognized church and they should follow the assigned leader.

Tran Huu Canh, age 62 was sentenced to 13 years in prison after being charged under Article 91 of the Penal Code. As the leader of 12 Cao Dai followers he was arrested in Cambodia when trying to distribute information at an international meeting in 2004 about persecution suffered by the Cao Dai in Vietnam.

Montagnard

Human Rights Watch has published a detailed report in 2011 and 2012 on the continuing religious persecution of Montagnard. Their languages are being lost; children are shamed into believing they are not worthy. Montagnard prisoners in Hanoi are not allowed to write letters in their native language. Names of rivers, forests, mountains and provinces have been altered into Vietnamese names. This can be seen as a quiet genocide and ethnic cleansing targeting Montagnard people⁹.

On August 21st 2012, there had been reports that the Montagnard people were in the midst of prayer when they were raided by the Vietnamese police. In November 2012, Vietnam Police carried out a sweeping operation of about 1,000 soldiers searching for Montagnards. There are currently over 400 Montagnards imprisoned for their religious beliefs, some of them up to 16 years.

Am Linh, age 71 was arrested under Article 87 of the Penal Code, for undermining the policy of national unity. A member of the Bahnar ethnic group from Dak Doa district in Gia Lai province, Am Linh was arrested after a protest by Montagnard people in April 2008. He was accused of advancing separatist policies as a member of the banned "Tin Lanh Dega" (Dega Protestant) religion¹⁰.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/asia/vietnam>

¹⁰ Campaign to abolish Torture in Vietnam Report-January 2014

UNITED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM

Subject: Religious Repression Against The Unified Buddhist Church Of Vietnam (UBCV)

Buddhism is the majority religion in Vietnam followed by 80% of the population. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is the oldest and largest religious organization in Vietnam. But it is not recognized by the Vietnamese government and has been a key target of repression since 1975.

Under the communist rule, the government branded the UBCV as an illegal reactionary organization and has set up tight control over all activities and monks, members of the UBCV. In addition, thousands of police disguised as monks have infiltrated UBCV pagodas to keep permanent surveillance on the activities of monks and followers.

The authorities have continuously pursued a policy of repression against the UBCV confiscating its property, arresting and harassing its monks, nuns and followers. The UBCV members have suffered Police interrogations, intimidation, public denunciation and even expulsion of monks, nuns from their pagodas. Police surround key UBCV pagodas during Buddhist celebrations to prevent followers from attending prayers and celebrations. Police hire local thugs to vandalize UBCV property and assault UBCV members. Police punish UBCV followers by refusing to deliver residence permits and expelling their children from school or making them lose their jobs.

Today, we would like to draw the Canadian government's attention to the following serious cases and call upon Canada to urgently raise them with the Vietnamese government.

- The UBCV Supreme Patriarch Thich Quang Do is under house arrest at the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City without any justification or charge. He has spent the past 30 years under different forms of detention including internal exile, prison and house arrest.
- Venerable Thich Thanh Quang, superior monk of the Giac Minh Pagoda in Danang, has been the target of systematic repression over the past four years. On Jan 10, 2014 he was physically assaulted by police.
- Mr. Le Cong Cau, head of the UBCV's Buddhist Youth Movement (BYM) has been interrogated, threatened and placed under house arrest at his home in Hue because of his peaceful activities for religious freedom.
- Since 2014, over 100 members of the BYM have been placed under house arrest without any due process of law. Leaders subjected to harassment include Nguyen Tat Truc (Hue), Hoang Nhu Dao (Phuong Dinh), Ms. Hoang thi Hong Phuong, Van Dinh Tat and Nguyen Sac (Quang Dien), Ngo Duc Tien and Van Tien Nhi (Phu Vang), Truong Dinh Hieu (Huong Tra), Nguyen Dinh Mong (Huong Thuy). The BYM reports that it has been unable to contact many other members and fears for their security.
- Venerable Thich Chon Tam is the target of repeated harassments, physical assaults and threats. Police keep permanent watch on the Tu Hieu Pagoda in Ho Chi Minh where he is in temporary residence and follow him wherever he goes.

If religious freedom is respected in Vietnam as claimed by the Vietnamese government, then Vietnam must cease repression of UBCV followers, release all those arbitrarily detained because of their religious beliefs and re-establish the legitimate right to existence of the UBCV.

Canada has always been at the forefront of international effort to press for the respect of human rights and religious freedom. We take this opportunity today to request Canada to press Vietnam to take the following steps:

- Recognize the legitimacy of the UBCV and allow the UBCV full freedom of religious activity.
- Release all UBCV clergy and followers imprisoned solely on account of the non-violent exercise or expression of their religious beliefs.
- Restore all UBCV Pagodas, administrative premises and cultural, social, medical, educational and humanitarian institutions confiscated after 1975, as well as all Pagodas and monasteries in Northern VN confiscated after 1945.
- Repeal or revise decrees and directives on religion which impose restrictions on the activities of religious organizations or submit them to Communist Party control.
- Respect the fundamental rights to freedom of religion or belief as guaranteed in Article 18 of the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thich Quang Do | Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

PARIS, 11 February 2014 (Vietnam Committee) – The Vietnam Committee on Human Rights is honoured to present exclusive audio messages by prominent dissident Thich Quang Do, leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), and Le Cong Cau, head of the UBCV-affiliated Buddhist Youth Movement. The messages were made public at a meeting on “Banned Civil Society Voices” at the United Nations in Geneva on Tuesday 4 February 2014, organized by the VCHR and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam (UBCV) and 2014 Nobel Peace prize nominee, sent this message in English from the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery where he has been under *de facto* house arrest since 2003:

MESSAGE FROM THICH QUANG DO

Ladies and Gentlemen, It is an honour for me to address this meeting at the United Nations today. My name is Thich Quang Do, I am a Buddhist monk from Vietnam. I am sorry that I cannot be with you in person – I am under house arrest at the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon, Vietnam. This message was recorded in secret, and it is thanks to the courage of many people that it reaches your meeting today. Tomorrow, Vietnam will be examined at the Human Rights Council for its second Universal Periodic Review.

You will hear the Vietnamese government's report on human rights. But you will not hear the voices of the victims. I am speaking here for those whose voices are stifled in Vietnam simply because of their dissenting opinions or beliefs. My own case is a typical example. I have spent the past three decades under different forms of detention – ten years in internal exile, seven years in prison and the rest under house arrest without charge. What is my “crime”? That of calling on Vietnam to respect its people's rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, religion and belief. When I was released from prison and

placed under house arrest in 1998, I said: “*I have come from a small prison into a larger one*”. Today I am truly a prisoner in my own monastery. Police keep watch on me day and night, my communications are monitored and I cannot travel. My visitors are harassed and intercepted. I cannot even preach in my Monastery. In January 2014, my personal assistant Venerable Thich Chon Tam was assaulted by Police and ordered to leave Saigon. Vietnam’s aim is to isolate me completely, cut off my contacts with the outside world, and ultimately silence my voice. To be deprived of one’s freedom is intolerable under any circumstances. To be under house arrest without charge, isolated and never knowing when you will be released, is a most cruel form of torture, both mental and physical. I have endured this for the past ten years. But I am not alone. In Vietnam today, hundreds of dissidents and human rights defenders are subjected to the torture of house arrest without any due process of law. Last year, Vietnam signed the UN Convention Against Torture. We hoped this was a step forward. But in reality, nothing has changed. Why should Vietnam try so hard to silence us?

It is because the Communist regime can tolerate no criticism of the one-Party state. Since its last Universal Periodic Review, Vietnam promised to improve human rights. But on the contrary, it has launched a crack-down on critics and dissidents on an unprecedented scale. Young bloggers, journalists, defenders of worker rights, land rights, or the rights of women and children have suffered harassments and imprisonment as never before.

This crack-down has also targeted the religious communities. Religious freedom is important everywhere – it is enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Bill of Rights, and also in the Vietnamese Constitution. It is a right that cannot be waived, even in times of war. But in Vietnam, religious freedom is particularly important. In the absence of opposition parties, free trade unions or independent NGOs, the religious movements are essential voices of civil society, putting forth the people’s grievances and pressing for reforms.

As head of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, which is not recognized by the authorities, I have not only called for religious freedom, but also for the right to multi-party democracy, to publish independent newspapers, to demonstrate freely, to express one’s views without fear. I have called for abolition of the death penalty, more social equity, and the end to the system of the family residence permit, which is used as a tool of discrimination and control. I will continue to press for human rights and democratic freedoms in Vietnam, whatever price I have to pay. At tomorrow’s Universal Periodic Review, I call upon all governments to speak out for those whose voices are stifled in Vietnam. I urge you to press for concrete improvements, such as the recognition of the legal status of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and all other non-recognized religions, the release of religious and political prisoners, and the abolition - once and for all - of the practice of arbitrary house arrest without charge.

2014-02-03: Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

PARIS, 3 February 2014 (VIETNAM COMMITTEE) – In the run-up to the second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Vietnam at the United Nation’s Human Rights Council on Wednesday 5 February, Open letters from very different personalities have called on the Vietnamese delegation to the UPR to candidly admit its widespread violations of human rights, take heed of recommendations made by civil society and call on the UN Human Rights Council to help work out a plan of concrete measures to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Vietnam. Mr. Dang Xuong Hung, a former high official in

Vietnam's Foreign Ministry and Vietnamese Consul General in Geneva from 2008 until 2012, when he formally withdrew from Vietnamese Communist Party, sent an Open Letter to the Vietnamese delegation on 25 January 2014. He expressed empathy with Vietnamese diplomats who *"care about Vietnam, but are shackled by invisible bonds"* because they are allowed only to *"think and act according to the dictates of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV)"*. However, he said, they should be aware that the CPV is seeking only to cling on to power, whilst ignoring the people's demands for democracy and human rights. *"If you really love your country"* he wrote *"you should show it through your attitude and action at the upcoming UPR session"*. He urged the delegation to heed the criticisms and recommendations made by UN member states and civil society, and recognize Vietnam's abysmal human rights record.

At the previous UPR in 2009, he said, Vietnam systematically rejected all criticism, confining itself to *"petty acts"* such as *"queuing up early to sign on for countries who would make speeches praising Vietnam, such as Laos or Cuba"*, or *"removing copies of speeches by NGO delegations, such as that of Vo Van Ai, and throwing them into the trash-can at the Embassy"* to hide the facts from UN member states. *"Once we dare speak the truth [and admit these violations], we won't have to waste time dishonestly concealing the facts"*. *"This is especially important now that Vietnam is a member of the UN Human Rights Council"*, he wrote.

Mr. Vo Van Ai, President of the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights(VCHR), in an Open Letter today, called on the Vietnamese delegation, led by Deputy Minister Ha Kim Ngoc, to make an unprecedented gesture at the upcoming UPR session on Wednesday. Instead of reading out a lengthy report claiming Vietnam's respect for human rights, the delegation should *"publicly tear up the government's report and ask the Human Rights Council to devote the full session to identifying persistent human rights abuses in Vietnam and making concrete recommendations to help Vietnam improve its human rights situation and respect the international human rights treaties to which it is a state party"*.

Mr. Ai warned that Vietnam's poor human rights performance had led to growing popular discontent, citing three salient phenomena in 2013-2014;(a) the withdrawal from the Communist Party of many prominent members, including former officials and veterans with over 40 and 50 years of service; (b) the massive public demand for abolition of Article 4 of the Constitution (on the CPV's political monopoly) during the government's opinion poll on Constitutional reform in 2013, and the strong disappointment that followed the adoption of the Constitution with no change in Article 4;(c) the continuing demonstrations by young activists in Saigon, Hanoi and all over Vietnam to denounce border disputes or celebrate International Human Rights Day, in spite of brutal repression by Police. These examples were *"three warning bells that should awaken the government and Party to the growing dissatisfaction of the Vietnamese people"*, wrote Vo Van Ai.

Since Mr. Ai began raising human rights abuses in Vietnam at the United Nations each year since 1986, Vietnam's sole response had been to out-rightly reject all allegations (*e.g. "there are no political prisoners in Vietnam, only people who violate the law: there is no repression of religious movements, only those who are political" etc.*), or by trying to *"shoot the messenger"* by making person attacks on himself and his delegation. The UPR provided a *"golden opportunity"* for the Vietnamese delegation to *"leave your mark on history, and send a strong message to the government and the Party that this is how to win the people's hearts,*

by standing beside them in their aspirations for democratic freedoms and human rights”, he said. Mr. Ai admitted that he was asking the impossible of the Vietnamese delegation, but concluded: “Throughout our history, the Vietnamese people have achieved the impossible again and again. Human beings have an infinite capacity for transforming suffering into happiness, slavery into freedom. Where there is a will there is a way!”

On Tuesday February 4th 2014, one day before Vietnam’s URP, Mr. Vo Van Ai spoke at an Information meeting organized by the FIDH (International Federation on Human Rights) and the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, and co-sponsored by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch entitled “Banned Civil Society Voices”. There was exclusive audio testimonies from the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam Patriarch Thich Quang Do and the Buddhist Youth leader Le Cong Cau, both of whom are currently under house arrest.

CATHOLIC CHURCH OF VIETNAM

April 18: Supreme Court adjourns Catholic activists' appeal trial

The Vietnamese Supreme Court adjourned to an unspecified date the appeal trial of 14 young Catholics and Protestants from Vinh and Thanh Hoa, convicted in January by a lower court on terrorism charges. The appeal trial had been set for this day.

According to some, the decision is related to recent positions taken by the US government and the European Parliament, who have openly criticized the Vietnamese government for violations of human rights and religious freedom.

In this letter announcing the postponement of the trial, the Court justified its action claiming that some jury members were unable to attend because they were detained elsewhere for "family reason." At the same time, the judges did not set a future date for the start of the appeal process. One of the defence lawyers, who urged the court to pick a day, was told that there were no dates on the calendar.

For the relatives of the accused, these moves are orchestrated by the government, which is trying to "maintain" the climax of uncertainty surrounding the trial in order to "discourage" potential opponents, at a time when signatures are being collected across the country demanding their release. Bishops, priests, lay people and Buddhist monks have held prayers in support of the group, which is increasingly, become an "icon" of the "non-violent" struggle against corruption. The defendants often said that their action was meant to help the population, spreading news and criticism about corruption among party and government members who got rich during the financial crisis.

April 27: Authorities attack priests and bishop united to the end and single-party rule

Authorities in Trang Bom district, Dong Nai province, in the south-east of Vietnam, have launched a harsh campaign against 28 priests of the Diocese of Xuan Loc. They are being targeted by the People's Committee, on charges of giving prominence to the bishop's campaign in support of the reform of the 1992 Constitution for multiparty rule. The letter sent by the leaders of the local administration is just the latest episode in a long battle that sees the government pitted against the Catholic prelates, deployed in support of the people in the defense of basic rights.

At the request of Msgr. Dominique Nguyen Chu Trinh, the priests of the district of Trang Bom have organized a campaign to explain and publicize the prelates' open letter in support of the constitutional reform. It includes reforms aimed at radical change of Vietnamese policy and institutions in multiparty key. In an attempt to prevent the initiative spreading further and to defend the current state apparatus, the district authorities have attacked the bishop and priests head on, distorting the facts and information provided by the episcopate.

July 31: Catholic petitioners beaten by police outside cathedral

Catholics praying for the resolution of land disputes outside Notre Dame Cathedral in Ho Chi Minh City were forcibly removed and beaten by police and security agents.

An unknown number of people praying in front of the statue of Our Lady, just outside the Cathedral's main entrance, were dragged onto buses by police. Those who resisted were brutally beaten and had their mobile phone taken away. Following the assault, several people had to be taken to a hospital. In photographs of one young woman beaten by police, her face is swollen and bruised and her mouth filled with dried blood.

The petitioners had reportedly come to the church from their homes in the South-eastern and South-western provinces to pray for the resolution of land disputes after their land and property was seized by the local authorities, according to reports posted on Dân Làm Báo, a Vietnamese-language blog. Despite having participated in dozens of lawsuits, the petitioners' complaints have not been resolved.

September 4: Police open fire, crack down on Christian protesters

In one of the bloodiest religious crackdowns in recent years in Vietnam, police fired multiple gunshots and lobbed grenades in front of a church as they violently dispersed hundreds of Catholics demanding the release of two parishioners in North Central Coast province. An unknown number of people were rushed to the hospital with injuries after being beaten by police who also fired in the air in front of the My Yen church in Nghe An province as several hundred parishioners rallied for the release of the parishioners arrested for no valid reason two months previously.

The police fired 15 gun shots in front of the My Yen church and also beat some parishioners with electric batons. Some parishioners had to be hospitalized. Approximately ten people were arrested.

Bloggers Nghiem Viet Anh and Bui Minh Hang shared a Vietnam Redemptories Church news website showing several people receiving treatment for head, hand stomach, and neck injuries. Online reports said that up to 3000 policemen and soldier may have been mobilized in the crackdown. One report said, "They shot and threw grenades behind the My Yen church."

At the hospital, police tried to stop people from getting treatment. Some patients were in critical situation and have been sent to Hanoi for treatment.

Ngo Van Khoi and Nguyen Van Hai had been taken away by suspected government security agents in June and have been held without trial since then. Their families were informed they were being held for "disturbing public order," but no specific incidents were cited.

September 5: Authorities refuse to free two church Parishioners, break up demonstration.

Security remained tight in Nghi Phuong village in Nghe An province one day after police opened fire in front of My Yen church as they moved to break up a demonstration by hundreds demanding the freedom of parishioners Ngo Van Khoi and Nguyen Van Hai, who had been held without trial for nearly three months.

“The village's chairman lied to us. We're Catholics and we only can pray” a parishioners said. “We did not use violence but they treated us like that”.

September 15: Vietnamese government and state TV launch attacks on Bishop of Vinh

A report aired made slanderous accusations against Msgr. Paul Nguyen Thai Hop and the local Catholic community. He is charged with revolting and exploiting a story to create legal cases of religious persecution.

Vietnamese authorities, with the support of the media, launched a violent attack against the Vinh diocese and Msgr. Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, "guilty" of asking for the release of two parishioners imprisoned for months without motive. In a 10-minute report broadcasted by state television, harsh accusations were made against the prelate, guilty of "lying, breaking the law on purpose and inciting to revolt" against Hanoi. The authorities say the Catholics "artfully fabricated" a legal issue to transform it into a case of "religious persecution." The smear campaign was followed by threats against the Catholic community of My Yen and Nghe An, with the promise of "new arrests" if the protests continued.

Along with the bishop, the Vietnamese authorities have also targeted the website of the diocese of Vinh. Ngo Ba Hao (vice-president of the Committee for telecommunications) sent an urgent letter to Msgr. Paul asking him to shut down the Website of the diocese or face legal actions, as the Website is operated without the government permission. In fact, the government has never granted any such permission to Church institutions. Due to pastoral needs dioceses in Vietnam run their websites at the risk of being prosecuted at any time.

September 25: Authorities lock up family of jailed pastor

Authorities in Vietnam sealed the gates of the house of jailed prominent Vietnamese activist and Christian pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, preventing his wife and their five children from leaving the premises for unknown reasons.

They took action after police set up a checkpoint outside the house in Pleiku town, located in the country's central highland region, and trailed the wife, Tran Thi Hong, wherever she went.

Chinh, pastor of a banned church, was sentenced to 11 years in prison in March last year for "undermining unity" by having ties with anti-government groups and writing and distributing material that slandered government authorities.

Hong said she was not sure why the police had used wire to seal the gates of her house, preventing her from leaving even to get medicine for her sick child.

CAO DAI OF VIETNAM

1. Overview of Cao dai Religion

Third Amnesty of God or Đại-Đạo Tam-Kỳ Phổ-Độ, also known as Caodaism or Cao dai religion, is a new religion founded in South Vietnam in 1926 by God through spirits séances for human beings. Caodaism calls for unity and respect for all faiths as well as for love, justice, peace, freedom and democracy.

The Cao dai religion had practiced her faith without government interference and had developed rapidly until the end of April 1975. Under the Communist rule, the practice of faith by independent Cao dai practitioners is no longer allowed.

In 1975 Mr. Tran Quang Vinh, Ex-Archbishop of Cao dai, was arrested by the Vietnamese Government and died in prison. Many dignitaries were also detained and sent to re-education camps to be brainwashed.

The new Communist regime also made up the so called “Cao dai Judgment” on Sept. 20th 1978 to accuse Caodaism as a political organization under the form of a religion, a tool of France, Japan and the United States. Caodaists were accused of treason and anti-revolutionary. Many high-ranking dignitaries, such as Acting Pope, Le Van Trung (Chief of the Executive Body), and Law Protector, Hộ Pháp Pham Cong Tac (chief of the Legislative Body) were also charged with the above crimes.

In 1979 the Vietnamese Communist Party disbanded the Sacerdotal Council of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See and all Cao dai Religious Administrations from the central to local levels, and established the Governance Council (Hoi Dong Chuong Quan) under the government’s control. 42 of the 46 religious properties of Tayninh Holy See were confiscated. They modified our religious laws and traditional rituals, forbade our assembly for meetings and the installation of God’s altar, and did not allow us to preach our religious teachings, print religious books, or make photocopies of religious materials. Spirits séance which is the foundation of our religion is also prohibited.

2. Typical Cases against Cao dai Independent Practitioners:

On March 26 2014, female Sub-dignitary Nguyen Bach Phung in Vinh Long City, Vinh Long Province, Secretary of the Representative Committee of the Popular Bloc of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See (of the Independent Cao dai organization) was invited to speak in a hearing at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee of the U.S. House of Representative through the Internet. The police of Vinh Long province had stationed at two ends of the road leading into her house from 20 to 27 of March, 2014. At 10:30 pm Vietnamese time on March 26 (11:30am ET) her connection to the Internet was cut off; and 5 minutes later the electricity at her house was also cut off until 9am the following day to prevent her from presenting her case at the hearing.

Also during this time, Sub-dignitary Hua Phi in Duc Trong district, Lam Dong Province, the Chief of the Representative Committee of the Popular Bloc of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See was constantly controlled by many strangers. Before March 26, 2014 he was forced to meet

the police of Lam Dong province for questioning; and later, the police continuously came to his home for further questioning.

On Jan. 5, 2014 while some independent Cao dai members in the City of Vinh Long, Vinh Long province held a memorial service for Mrs Ngo Thi Thanh Dao at a private home, the police and government officials came and ordered them to stop the ceremony for not seeking the permission from the pro-government Cao dai Governance Council.

On Nov. 3, 2013 several independent Cao dai held a ceremony for Student Priest Thai Kim Thanh at the home of Sub-dignitary Nguyen Kim Lan in Vinh Long City, Vinh Long province. The police used the Decree 92, effective in January of 2013 to accuse them of violating the law. Then the police summoned three young Cao dai followers to the police station to question and intimidate them.

The Vietnamese Communist authority also monitored closely the movement of the independent Cao dai practitioners. On July 25, 2013 the police of Vinh Long province stopped the bus carrying Sub-dignitaries Nguyen Kim Lan and Nguyen Bach Phung who are also the members of the Inter-Faith Council of Vietnam and forced the bus driver to throw these two Sub-dignitaries out of the bus. The police had stationed at two ends of the road leading into their house from July 25 to July 29, 2013 to prevent them from going out of the province.

On Sept. 12, 2013 Mr Ta Thi Thu Nga invited the clergy members and followers of the independent Cao dai religion to hold a ceremony to establish God's altar at her home in Bau Nang village, Tay Ninh province. Several Cao dai practitioners were attacked and harrassed by police, thugs and members of pro-government Cao dai Governance Council.

On July 3, 2013 government officials and the police of Tien Giang province along with thugs supported the local members of the pro-government Cao dai Governance Council to take over the Long Binh Temple of the independent Cao dai members. They attacked these members and caused severely injuries to several of these members.



Picture of Sub-dignitary Le Thi Ket with injury on July 3, 2013

On Sept. 16, 2012 the government helped the pro-government Cao dai Governance Council to take over the Phu My Temple of Binh Dinh province; again several independent Cao dai members were attacked and injured. A member of the pro-government Cao dai group poured petroleum over the body of Mr Tru and want to burn him but was dissuaded by some in his own group.



PTB Nguyễn Công Tru bị đánh tét mặt và cổ

Sub-dignitary Nguyen Cong Tru were injured on Sept. 16, 2012



Picture of Sub-Dignitary Nguyen Nhon's injury with broken nose on Sept. 16, 2012

The above cases are just a few examples of suppression of religion by the Vietnamese Government. The following are the strategies the Government used to abolish the independent Cao dai religion and replace it with a government sanctioned Cao dai organization.

3. The Communist Government's Assimilation of and Control over the Cao dai Religion

Since 1975, the government has issued many laws and top secret documents proving that its policies are to destroy the Cao dai religion created by God, which has been practiced prior to April 1975, and to establish a new Cao dai organization guided by the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). For example, the Circular Number 2, signed in 1999 by Mr Le Quang Vinh in Hanoi, said that schools for training Cao dai's dignitaries must be permitted by the government and that all positions of the dignitaries, from the lowest level (Student Priest) to the highest ones such as the Pope and Law Protector must all be approved by the government.

Today the VCP provides guidance and controls all Caodaist activities from central to local levels. Hanoi authority can select or dismiss Dignitaries and Sub-dignitaries as they wish. The highest position of the pro-government governance Council of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See chosen by the VCP is Cardinal Nguyen Thanh Tam. While the Cao dai Constitution and the New Codes are based on democratic principles and separation of power between the Executive and the Legislative Bodies, the VCP conveys all powers to one person. They give order to Mr Nguyen Thanh Tam to control both the Executive and Legislative Branches of the government sanctioned Cao dai organization. He is in fact the puppet of Hanoi regime. The majority of Cao dai practitioners consider his position as illegitimate and does not recognize the pro-government Governance Council, which recently changed its name to the Sacerdotal Council.

Furthermore, traditionally Caodaism decentralizes powers to avoid dictatorship. For example, there were 5 administrative levels and each had its own autonomous power for religious purpose, but the Vietnamese rulers had reduced to two levels. The aim of centralized power is to help the VCP controlling the Cao dai religion easier and more effective. However, in doing so, the former destroys the latter.

On October 18 2012, the pro-government Governance Council of the Cao dai Tayninh was allowed by the Communist authorities to organize the so-called “Popular Council Congress”. The aim of this congress was to promote the Communist party’s propaganda and interest. According to the Representative Committee of the Popular Bloc, more than 5,000 followers participated in the Congress. Many of Vietnamese communist government’s high-ranking officials such as Mr. Pham Dung, Vice Interior Minister, also came to support the event and gave 50 million dong (Vietnamese currency) to the Governance Council. In addition, the government of Tayninh Province also gave 50 million dong to the Council.

Today, members of the VCP and even secret police are flooding inside the Tayninh Holy See to watch independent Cao dai followers as the above pictures shown. It is obvious that religions under the control of Vietnamese Communist regime are not genuine and not purely conducting religious activities as they did before April 1975. Most of Cao dai followers are discontent with the pro-government Cao dai Governance Council and they rather pray at home, and not going to the temples under the Communist’s control. That is why the Decree 92 was born to suppress religious activities even at private houses.

Therefore, the Representative Committee of the Popular Bloc of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See was founded in 2000, and it is the independent Cao dai Religion which challenges the VCP’s policies and fights for justice. Its leaders and members such as Hua Phi, Nguyen Kim Lan, Nguyen Bach Phung and so on, are subject to harassment, threat of life, intimidation, financial damage, communication cut-off, restriction of their movement and their livelihood is jeopardized spiritually and materialistically.

After consolidating its control power on religion at home, the Vietnamese Communist Party extends its activities overseas. The Party’s Politburo by all means sends party members to several countries in the world and uses all means to induce the credulous Vietnamese refugees to work for them. Then, Hanoi’s authority puts these individuals into the Vietnamese communities overseas to implement the Decree 36, aiming at division of these communities and convincing some individuals to follow the communist party’s policy.

As an evidence happening to the Cao dai religion, when last year the VCP ordered the pro-government Governance Council to appoint Mr Tran Quang Canh, now living in California, U.S.A. as the acting chief of the Representative Committee of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See Overseas, and five individuals, living in Virginia, U.S.A. (close to Washington D.C.) serving as members of the Executive Committee of the Religious District Of Washington D.C. and four other individuals, living in New Jersey, U.S.A. as members the Executive Committee of Religious District of Camden, New Jersey.

Hanoi authority allows the pro-government Cao dai Governance Council to travel abroad while they severely control the movement of the independent Cao dai practitioners. On May 5, 2013 they guided the delegation of the Pro-government Governance Council of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See to visit Oomoto religion in Japan with the participation of Mr. Trang Van Hai, the Chief of Religious Affair Committee of the Tayninh province. On July 20, 2013 the delegation of the Governance Council of the Tayninh Holy See also visited the Tao Yuan religion in Taiwan under the guidance of Mr Vo Thanh Cong, deputy head of the Religious Affair Committee of the Tayninh province. The VCP now uses religion as a tool to propagate that religious freedom is observed in Vietnam for its own interest.

The VCP examines and ratifies backgrounds of all dignitaries and sub-dignitaries of the pro-government Governance Council of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See, which is the branch-new Cao dai of the VCP, not Cao dai established in 1926 by God, and those chosen or approved must serve the Vietnamese rulers' interests.

4. Petition with the Government of Canada:

In the face of danger of Caodaist extermination, the United Cao dai Tay Ninh Holy See Overseas along with faithful dignitaries, followers abroad and at home, the Representative Committee of the Popular Bloc of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See who follow the Religious Constitution, and the laws in effect prior to April 1975, respectfully request your help in defending religious freedom by putting pressure on the Vietnamese government to implement the followings:

1. Remove the Cao dai Judgment created on Sept. 20, 1978 and the Religious Edict Number 01 created on March 1, 1979 by the Communist Government.
2. Remove all Religious Edicts, Resolutions, Directives and laws, which focus on training dignitaries and followers so that they will follow the Vietnamese Communist Party's orders in controlling all religious organizations and activities.
3. The Communist government must truly respect freedom of religion and beliefs and will not put party members into all religions in Vietnam, including Cao dai.
4. The Fatherland Front and other government agencies shall not harass, use secret police and thugs to assault and expel independent dignitaries, sub-dignitaries and followers out of their temples and later appropriating these temples, Mother-God temples, and other religious properties.
5. Independent Caodaists must be free to publish religious books and to promote materials, documents and preach religious teachings of the Sacerdotal Council of the Cao dai Tayninh Holy See in effect prior to April 1975.
6. All religious and human rights political activist prisoners must be released.
7. The Vietnamese Communists are not allowed under the pretext of religion to create disorders in religious activities and social orders overseas and at home in Vietnam.
8. The Communist members under disguise of Caodaists must leave the Sacerdotal Council of Tay Ninh Holy See and return all religious properties to the independent Cao dai Religion with the supervision of the United Nations.
9. The VCP is not allowed to interfere into internal religious activities.

We would like to respectfully request the Government of Canada to conduct the followings:

1. Visiting the independent Cao dai practitioners in Vietnam and protecting them.
2. Setting the pre-requisite human rights conditions for Vietnam before providing any foreign aid or approving any bilateral agreement between Canada and Vietnam.
3. Promoting human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam.
4. Protecting Canadian Vietnamese who advocate for democracy, human rights and religious freedom for Vietnam but their life and their families' life are under threat both in Vietnam and Canada.

HOA HAO BUDDHISM OF VIETNAM

Hoa Hao Buddhism was founded in 1939 by the Prophet HUYNH PHU SO, at Hoa Hao village in An Giang province, South Vietnam.

Hoa Hao Buddhism currently has more than 6 million followers, most of who live in the Mekong Delta, the rice granary of Vietnam. The role of the Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation (HHBC) is very important in today's Vietnamese society and economy, as 80% of the peasants in this region are members of HHBC. They are an important contributing force to the development of economic growth and public welfare in Southern Vietnam. The Hoa Hao Buddhists form civic organizations to serve their communities and practice their faith at their local institutions.

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Vietnam Communist Government conducted a suppressive policy to prevent Hoa Hao Buddhism from developing by using its front organization, the "State Church", to exterminate the original Hoa Hao Buddhism. Since then, many Hoa Hao Buddhists have been persecuted and sentenced to more than hundred years of imprisonment for practicing the teaching of Prophet HUYNH PHU SO but rejecting to join the State Church. Hoa Hao Buddhists were wrongly imprisoned simply because they had protested the abuse of power by the Vietnamese authorities, and because of their desire to practice their religion freely.

For more than 35 years, the Vietnamese Communist authorities have laid out campaigns of suppression and extermination of the independent practice of Hoa Hao Buddhism. They have confiscated Church properties, books, and tapes; as well as harassed, assaulted, and incarcerated many Hoa Hao Buddhist leaders and members. Today, Hoa Hao Buddhists are in constant danger of being imprisoned, as they are still not allowed to participate in large religious gatherings. The Vietnamese Government continues to violate the right of religious freedom and the internationally recognized human rights, and any effort to advocate freedom of religion is punished by the Vietnamese Government.

The Canadian Government should hold the Vietnamese Government accountable for these transgressions against basic human rights and religious freedom. These conditions must be seen as crucial to promoting an open and reciprocal Canada-Vietnam relationship. They are the fundamental pre-requisites of a democratic society, and are also issues of deep concern to us. Therefore, we suggest that the Canadian Government supports this position as pre-requisite conditions in negotiation with the Vietnamese Government for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement.

Specifically, all Hoa Hao Buddhist prisoners who have been wrongfully convicted and/or imprisoned should be immediately released. We would like to bring to your attention and ask for your intervention in the following cases:

1. Mai Thi Dung, born in 1969, Mrs. Dung is a non-violent activist, a resident of My An village, Cho Moi district, in the An Giang province. She was arrested on August 5th 2005 in her home district, and sentenced to 11 years in prison on September 15th 2005 for "disturbing public order and resisting law enforcement officials". Mai Thi Dung is currently serving the 9th year of her sentence in Thanh Oai prison, Thanh Xuan district, located in Hanoi (which is over a thousand kilometers away from her residence). Mrs. Dung has been very ill for a number of years in prison; she cannot walk on her own, and she has been repeatedly denied medical treatment for a severe gallbladder disease that may lead to her death, unless she pleads guilty to her so called "crimes".

Cause of arrest: After the death of a fellow Hoa Hao Buddhist, Mr. Ha Hai, Hoa Hao Buddhists living nearby Mr. Hai's home had gathered to pray for him, once per week for 7 consecutive weeks. This is the tradition of Hoa Hao Buddhists following the death of a fellow member. However, the district police force surrounded Mr. Hai's home and asked people to disperse. Mrs. Dung and her husband, Mr. Vo Van Buu demanded that the government stop its unjust denial of HHB adherents' right to participate in a religious ceremony held in a private home. HH Buddhists inside Mr. Hai's home still continued the prayer session. After the prayer session was completed, all HH Buddhists dispersed but the district police force followed the couple (Dung and Buu) and arrested them at their resident on the following night for "disturbing public order and resisting law enforcement officials". Mr. Buu has served his 7 years sentence at Z30A prison in Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province. He was released on August 5th 2012, and Mrs. Dung continues serving her 11 years sentence in Thanh Oai prison, Thanh Xuan district, Hanoi capital.

2. Duong Thi Tron, born in 1947, Mrs. Tron is a resident of Tan Hoa village, Lai Vung district, in the Dong Thap province. She was arrested on October 2nd 2006 for "disturbing public order and resisting law enforcement officials", and sentenced to 9 years in prison. She is currently serving her 8th year at Z30A prison in Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province.

Cause of arrest: She organized a group prayer for the 59th anniversary of the missing founder of Hoa Hao Buddhism at her private home. Public security agents surrounded her home as neighbours stood by and watched, which caused a traffic jam. She demanded the freedom to practice her faith on occasions such as anniversary of the death of a loved one, prayer sessions, and religious celebrations, etc. She strongly resisted public security agents when they tried to prevent her from exercising her rights. Public security agents arrested her for "disturbing public order and resisting law enforcement officials".

3. Nguyen Van Lia, born in 1940, Mr. Lia is a resident of Kien Thanh village, Cho Moi district, in the An Giang province. He was arrested on April 24th 2011, tried on December 13th 2011 under Article 258 Item 2 of the Criminal Code: "Abusing the rights of freedom and democracy, causing harm to the government and law enforcement officials and national interests". He was sentenced to 5 years in prison by Cho Moi district trial court, and this was reduced to 4.5 years by the Appeal Court in An Giang province on March 2nd 2012. Nguyen Van Lia is currently serving his 3rd year in Z30 prison, Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province.

Cause of arrest: On April 24th 2011, he was on his way to a friend's house to attend the anniversary of the death of his friend's relative when public security agents from Cho Moi district stopped him. Mr. Lia argued that the government does not allow its employees to stop people from exercising their right to follow customs and engage in traditional celebrations. The agents let him go, but alerted their superiors who sent reinforcements. He was later stopped again on the road between Rach Chanh and Cai Nai bridges. A public security agent in charge of traffic control asked for his moped's ownership papers, which he promptly displayed. One of the agents subsequently bent the mirror on Mr. Lia's moped so that it would not conform to regulations. When the victim protested, using freedom and democracy in his argument against the arbitrary arrest, the Cho Moi public security officials cited him for "traffic violation" and detained him. But later on, he has been charged for violating the Article 258 of the Criminal Code by the Courts.

4. Bui Van Tham, born in 1987, and his father, Bui Van Trung, born in 1965. Both men are residents of Phuoc Hung village, An Phu district, in the An Giang province. Tham was detained on July 26th 2012, tried on September 21st 2012 for “resisting law enforcement officials”, and sentenced to 2.5 years. Tham is serving his 2nd year in Xuan Phuoc Prison, Tuy Hoa, Phu Yen province.

Cause of arrest: Mr. Tham's father, Bui Van Trung, promoted the discussion of HHB teachings during a gathering in his home to commemorate the passing of a relative. Mr. Trung built a pavilion where friends and others could carry on discussions of HHB teachings. After a gathering on March 23rd 2012, Mr. Trung retreated to the pavilion to study and think about his religion's teachings. Public security forces believed that he did not adhere to the charter of the government's own Hoa Hao Buddhist administrative unit, but lacking evidence to take action against Mr. Trung (who simply prayed and meditated quietly in his pavilion); they arrested his son on a deserted road when he was taking home-grown bean sprouts to sell. Tham vehemently denied the unfounded charges against him when he appeared in court.

Shortly thereafter, the power to Mr. Trung's home was cut off, and he was ordered by the government to tear down his pavilion. When he refused, he was arrested on October 30th 2012 for “resisting law enforcement officials and disturbing public order”, tried on January 23rd 2013 by the An Giang Court and sentenced to 4 years. He is currently serving his 2nd year in Z30A prison in Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province.

5. Nguyen Van Minh, born in 1980, is the brother-in-law of Bui Van Tham (above), and comes from the same district. He was arrested on February 11th 2014 for “disturbing public order and resisting law enforcement officials”. Currently, Mr. Minh is being held in police detention center of Lap Vo district, Dong Thap province, pending prosecutions, and court decision.

Cause of arrest: As the news came out that Bui Thi Kim-Phuong, a Hoa Hao Buddhist, and her husband Nguyen Bac Truyen (former Prisoner of Conscience) were detained by the Lap Vo district police on February 9th 2014 at their residence (in Long Hung village, Lap Vo district, Dong Thap province). While they were released on the same day, many items in their home were damaged or destroyed by the police force. Therefore, Hoa Hao Buddhists living near the couple's home sought to help them. On February 11th 2014, Mr. Minh, along with a group that included 17 Hoa Hao Buddhists and 3 friends, went to visit Kim-Phuong. About 5 Km away from their destination, they were stopped by the Lap Vo police force, and were beaten by police without cause and detained at Lap Vo district detention centre. The following day, police released 18 people, but retained three others: Nguyen Van Minh (Hoa Hao Buddhist), Bui Thi Minh-Hang (Human Rights Activist), and Nguyen Thi Thuy-Quynh (Blogger) for further investigations. These three people are currently on hunger strike to protest the government for violating their human rights and religious freedom.



Left: Bui Thi Minh Hang (seated middle front row) and Hoa Hao Buddhists before being beaten and arrested.

Courtesy binhtrung.org

Right: Hoa Hao Buddhists being detained at Lap Vo district detention centre.

Courtesy binhtrung.or

MONTAGNARD OF VIETNAM

****Available in English only****

Under the Chairmanship of:

- **The government of Vietnam's Religious Freedom Violation of the Montagnards (Anak Cu Chiang) - Indigenous Peoples of Vietnam's Central Highlands.**
- **Reference:** Article 70 of the Vietnam 1992 Constitution states that it protects religious freedom, but, in fact, since Vietnam unification there has been no freedom of religion in Vietnam and the government has violated this article 70 of its own Constitution.

The summary below on the religious freedom violation was committed by the Government of Vietnam in the Central Highlands. Mr. **Rong Nay**, Executive Director of the **Montagnard Human Rights Organization** (MHRO) based in North Carolina, USA, and also Vice-President of the **Council of Indigenous Peoples in Today's Vietnam (CIP-TVN)** presents the following:

Today I speak on behalf of 30 indigenous peoples in Vietnam, in general, and on behalf of the Montagnard people living both in the US and in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, in particular.

First of all I would like to thank Senator Ngo Thanh Hai for giving me this opportunity so that I can share the suffering that our peoples have experienced through the years on religious freedom and human rights abuses in Vietnam. It is sad to report that religious freedom and human rights conditions in Vietnam presently have gotten worse than any time in the past.

I would like to talk specifically about the case of the Montagnard people only. As you may know, "Montagnard" is a French term used to indicate the indigenous tribal peoples who live on their ancestral territories of Central Highlands of South Indochina. We are not "**ethnic minorities**" as labelled by the Vietnamese government but "**indigenous peoples**" who have been living on our ancestral lands for many thousand years. Our ancient "**Anak Cu Chiang**" peoples are not ethnically or linguistically connected to Vietnamese. They are our neighbor to the north decided to move south and occupied our lands, especially after French left Indochina in 1953. Since then, our culture, tradition, languages, and way of life have been destroyed.

The present government of Vietnam has a long memory about the Vietnam War and always looks at the Montagnard Indigenous Peoples as an historical enemy. This is because we fought alongside the French, and Americans during the French Indochina War and Vietnam War. We are also Christians and are rightful owners of the lands in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. For these reasons, the Montagnards are always viewed as a threat and national enemy that must be eliminated by the government of Vietnam.

Most Protestant Churches in Vietnam concentrated in the south of Central Highlands where all Montagnard indigenous peoples live. Historically, in 1932, the American missionaries brought Protestant religion to us. Due to this fact, in the eyes of the Vietnamese Communist, the

Montagnard Protestants are seen as an affiliate of the U.S. Protestant Churches, and therefore we are seen as a hostile force.

During the Indochina War and Vietnam War, the Protestant Religion was the main “concern” of the Party and government of Vietnam. After the Communist taking over of South Vietnam in 1975, the government of Vietnam has carried out a policy of punishment and discrimination against the Montagnard indigenous Christians in the Central Highlands. It has accused the Montagnard Protestant Church a spy of the American CIA and that we worship the “American religion.” At the same time the government of Vietnam expelled all foreign Protestant Missionaries and closed Churches and church-run clinics and school.

For this reason, the government of Vietnam has imprisoned thousands of Montagnard leaders and Christians for up to 12 years. These prisoners endure terrible conditions. Many Montagnard Indigenous Peoples who have lived on their ancestral lands before 1975 have been pushed out to the so called “new economic zones” or other areas far away from city so that this land is made available for Vietnamese migrating from North Vietnam.

After 26 years beyond suffering and extremely pains; in 2001 and 2004, over 30,000 Montagnard Indigenous peoples staged peaceful protests in Pleiku and Daklak provinces against the government of Vietnam. They demanded the return of their lands, the right to live and the right for freedom of religion. The government of Vietnam responded by sending a huge force of police and military into the Central Highlands and expelled all foreigners and news media. They used tanks and helicopters to crush the Montagnard peoples protest.

As a result, hundreds of Montagnard were killed, over 2,000 were missing without return, and over 500 were arrested and jailed for up to 17 years. The remaining thousands crossed into Cambodia to seek protection from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and later were resettled in the United States.

Montagnard Indigenous Christians in the Central Highlands

There are approximately half million of indigenous Christians in the Central Highlands, one of the largest Christian groups in Vietnam. **The government of Vietnam considers their worship illegal since 1975** and for this reason; the Montagnards have suffered a wave of oppression and persecution. On April 2001, the government of Vietnam had recognized the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) as a legal and under the government control; every Church must registration for worship. Many the Montagnard Protestant Church in the Central Highlands does not want to register and the government continues attacking Montagnard Christians in an effort to force them to give up their faith.

For decades the government security forces have terrorized Montagnard Christians with a ceremony where the police force Christians to take a public oath renouncing their Christian faith. These events have taken place in Gialai (Pleiku) and Daklak provinces where the police use this ritual as a means to intimidate and control other Montagnard Christians in the village. Since then the religious and human rights issues in Vietnam have become a matter of much controversy

between on the one hand, the government of Vietnam, and on the other hand international human rights organizations and Western government, particularly that of the United States.

From the time the United States designated Vietnam as a “**Country of Particular Concern**” for its violation of religious freedom in 2004, the government of Vietnam has released some religious dissidents and loudly reported that this included some prisoners from the Central Highlands. However the repression continued and months later the government of Vietnam issued new directives on religion that expedite church registration in order to force Christians to join government controlled churches.

The Montagnard Churches being divided into two groups:

1. **Under Government Control**: Churches that registered with the government and placed themselves under its control receive special treatments. Some pastors even have become government employees and/or secret agents. The government used this pastor as an “unofficial spokesperson” of the Montagnard Christians. The information the world received from this pastor was often biased and inaccurate, but the pastor usually reflected the official policies of the Vietnamese government.

This example illustrates how the government of Vietnam uses Montagnard Pastors and their Congregations to watch, report and spy on each other, not only in Vietnam, but within the U.S. These pastors and some church members become a part of the government’s security apparatus and a tool to control people and to restrict religious freedom. The registration of churches under government control gives legitimacy to government security forces to monitor, interrogate, arrest and imprison suspected Montagnard Church activities. **This is not freedom of religion.**

2. **Not Under Government Control**: Any Christian Churches that have not registered with the government are considered outlawed. The government of Vietnam continues to persecute members of unregistered Christian groups who practice their faith at home called “House Church”. They are always accused of being “spies” and “wanting to overthrow the government”.

The two groups of Montagnard Christian Churches above now become uneasy with each other. The government churches try to manipulate those who belong to house churches with intimidation and pressure. The government of Vietnam views the latter as a threat and tries to sow discord among the two groups.

This division is a strategy of the government to cause conflict within the Montagnard Christian community to undermine and destroy their own religion and people. **This is the same tactic used during the Vietnam War where the Montagnard people’s blood and flesh were used as tools of the war by both North and South governments of Vietnam. After the war ended, North and South united under Communist country, the Montagnards people still continue the sufferings as usual.**

Freedom of Religion in Vietnam

The government of Vietnam claims there is freedom of religion in Vietnam, but in reality, it is not true. The Vietnamese government only allows those who submit themselves to its iron rules. Khmer-Krom's Buddhist, Cham's Hindu/Muslim, or the Montagnards' Christians could not escape the government control.

Human Rights Watch has published a detailed report in March 2011 on the continuing religious persecution of Montagnards in the Central Highlands. Those who are arrested often end up in the living hell of Vietnam's prisons and secret jails. Reports from Montagnard prisoners tell a story of pain, loneliness, torture, forced labor, and isolation. **Montagnard pastors are forced to renounce their faith, they are beaten, and many put in prison to suffer long and terrible years in prison without enough food, medicine or even family visits.**

The Vietnam government continues to arrest, torture and jail Montagnard Christians. There are currently over 400 Montagnard Christians in prison for their religious or political beliefs for up to 17 years. Many suffer solitary confinement and torture. We are urging the Canada government, the United Nations and the international community to intervene on behalf of these Montagnard prisoners who were wrongly put in prison for their Christian faith and for those who were arrested trying to escape persecution or those who expressed peaceful dissent.

Refugee Protection

I will now address the issue **of Montagnard Refugee Protection** and the need for the UNHCR and the government of Canada to provide protection for those Montagnard asylum seekers seeking protection in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand or other countries.

The UNHCR site in Phnom Penh, Cambodia closed in Feb. 2011. Montagnard asylum seekers have no place to find sanctuary. Today over 200 Montagnards have escaped and are living illegally in Thailand. They do not want to go back to Vietnam and some have been arrested and put into detention by the Thai immigration police. We respectfully request that the government of Canada for helps and to bring them to Canada country.

Vietnam's Assimilation Policies and Degradation of the Environment

We, as Montagnard indigenous peoples, are crying out to keep our ancestral lands, our language and our culture. We ask for help from the Canada government, the United Nations and the world community. So many of our ancestral lands have been seized by the Communist government for rubber or coffee plantations. The government accuses our Montagnard people of causing trouble, but we only want only to keep our land and our farms, our heritage, our survival.

Our languages are being lost and our children shamed into believing they are no good. Even Montagnard prisoners in Hanoi's prisons are not allowed to write letters in Montagnard language. The Montagnard names of our rivers, forests, mountains, and provinces have been altered into Vietnamese names. We believe this is a policy of quiet genocide and ethnic cleansing targeting our Montagnard people. Why? The Vietnamese Communist government wants our

precious land of the Central Highlands and their goal is complete assimilation. For us, this is a terrible human rights violation.

The government of Vietnam has violated almost all principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right of self-determination. Our ancestral lands have been stolen and our precious forests and wildlife continue to be exploited by the government with de-forestation and illegal logging, including the unlawful trade in endangered species of wildlife.

The Need for Development

The United Nations, European Union, and Canada country have all acknowledged that the rate of poverty for the indigenous peoples, especially for the Montagnards, is much higher than the majority of Vietnamese population. This certainly stems from the lack of public and technical education that the government of Vietnam government has no desire to develop one. We even believe that Hanoi policies have been carefully constructed to prevent educational opportunities abroad for any indigenous students.

The policies have restricted NGOs from working in the Mekong Delta, Central Highlands for years. We now ask the UN and Canada government put more emphasis on development assistance, scholarships, boarding schools in the Mekong Delta and Central Highlands.

Indigenous students do not have the same opportunities in education and development as Vietnamese students. Among 15,000 Vietnamese students doing their study in the US for higher education, none of them is Khmer-Krom, Cham or the Montagnards. We believe more can be done and should be done for the children of the indigenous peoples who were the most poorest of the poor in Vietnam.

Vietnam violations of Free Emigration Agreement

On November 2011, one Montagnard American couple traveled to Vietnam from North Carolina spending thousands of dollars in air fare and 22 hours to fly to Saigon with the plan to visit their family in the Central Highlands. At the airport in Saigon, the police stopped the Montagnard American family and would not even allow them to talk with their family who had driven for hours from the Central Highlands to the airport to pick up the visiting family. The police then forced the Montagnard American citizens back to the US and said it was an order from government, regardless that the Vietnamese Embassy had already approved the visa.

Some Montagnard families, before their departure to the US, were made by the police to sign a paper saying that the American Montagnard visitor would not say anything bad about the Vietnamese government after leaving Vietnam.

We Montagnards are treated like enemies in our own homeland and we have lost more than any other group in Vietnam. We have lost the right to live, the right to own our ancestral lands, our language, the right to have practice our religious faith freely, the right to access international scholarships for education and travel, and the right to practice our traditional way of life,

including the administration of our tribal courts and tribal law according to our history and culture. Hundreds of prisoners in Ha Nam prison are suffering terrible abuse and isolation, and other Montagnard men, women and children quietly suffer in their villages under constant fear and police surveillance.

We are in danger of losing our entire culture. Our traditional way of life has been systematically abolished. International observers are restricted from the Central Highlands. Our religious freedom and political prisoners continue to be abused. The Central Highlands has become a prison for Montagnard Indigenous Peoples with the Communist system of internal security and secret police. The campaign of Vietnamization, assimilation and ethnic-cleansing has continued.

Mr. Senator,

It is our privilege to come here today to convey the truth about the violations of religious freedom and human rights violation that the indigenous peoples are facing right now in Vietnam, especially in the Central Highlands. We are asking the government of Canada for intervene:

1. The Vietnamese government should free all political and religious prisoners before any further trade or aid agreements with any countries in the world.
2. The Vietnamese government should immediately ratify the Convention against Torture and immediately stop the practice of holding political and religious prisoners in long periods of solitary confinement. The government must disclose accurate lists of prisoners and locations of the prisons. It must allow independent monitoring of all prisons and jails in the country.
3. The Vietnamese government must recognize and acknowledge to its citizens and the world that there are indigenous peoples living in Vietnam who include, among others, the Montagnard tribes of the Central Highlands, the Khmer-Krom and the Cham peoples.

The government of Vietnam must **respect and restore the rights of indigenous peoples as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, including the right to self-determination, the right to own ancestral land, and the right to education and development assistance. The government must immediately stop the expropriation of ancestral lands of indigenous peoples, and end the exploitation and destruction of natural resources such as forests, rivers, wildlife, and endangered species.

4. The Vietnamese government must repeal Decree 92 and end the persecution of independent religious organizations such as Montagnards' "House Churches" and it should end the registration requirement for religious organizations.

We hope that the Canada government and the world, will hear our prayer and plea for help.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share the plight of our indigenous peoples and the Montagnard people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

For the past 39 years, there have been many reports of human rights abused in the Central Highland, region of Vietnam. Sources indicate that things have heated up tremendously since the first of September, 2001 until today. The ongoing of these abuses has approximately been 50-100

years, they were not free to live as they deemed fit. This groups of people are known as Montagnard, also recognized as Anak Cu Chiang. After 1975, under the control of Hanoi Communist regime, Montagnard people are being intensely persecuted and harassed due to the fact that they're evangelism and catholic Christians. Their churches are regularly raided and pulverized directly to the pastors, church members, deacons and all believers from all villages.

Today, I speak on behalf of approximately 1,000,000 of the Montagnard Christians including 54 tribal and much more. Such as Evangelical Christian Fellowship, Baptist, Presbyterian, Mennonite and Montagnard Catholics called themselves as "House Worship", their voices are filled with grief and are weeping to be free from this inhuman world as soon as possible.

A short history of Evangelicals Christian Church of VN

Prior to 1932, Golden Smith a Missionary from USA has brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Montagnard Christian in Central High of Vietnam. The people are seeking true religious freedom according to teaching of the 66 books of bible and they are believe accord the doctrine that the Trinity includes God Father, Jesus Christ as Savior, and Holy Spirit as One being. Evangelical Christian Church member are faithfulness seek to be truly obedient and follow the discipline of the Christian Assembly International Laws.

After 2001, in January 2014, reports from Central Highlands stated that all pastors, elderly, deacons and all believers were at disruption. The Hanoi's Cong-an (police) invaded their homes in middle of the night and kidnapped their husband, without a warrant or without any reliable causes, simply because they were Christian. We have in our possession a list of over 50 pastors that are being detained. Of the four-hundred (400) believers, pastors including Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh and preachers, many were sentenced from two (2) to twelve (12) years of imprisonment. This human rights crisis has resulted in an increase of approximately 1 to 2,000 children whose fathers are missing and nearly a thousand wives who have husbands who have disappeared (See attachment the list the Christian prisoners).

Prisoner Persecution:

In 2007, there were approximately 100 believers that Communist beaten to death while in prison. Others were tortured and abused until they were about to die. These prisoners would only be sent back home as they were nearing death because of all the torture and physical abuses they endured while being in prison.

List of the names:

1. Y Glen Nie, B.Tah
2. Y Kuot Enuol, B.Dha Prong
3. Y Kuo Buonya (Buon Ko Mlieo)
4. Y Nging Nie (Buon Poc)
5. Y Rit Nie (Buon Poc) and many more.

In the beginning of January 2014, Hanoi used churches to go against other church, competing to where they should worship. For example; On January 13, 2014 police officers of Krong Pac (P.A. 88 &P.A. 90) captured Y jon Ayun and Y Nuen Ayun. They were severely tortured for seven days before being released. They were prohibited to spread the gospel to others and were not allowed to contact any foreigner press overseas.

The Discriminations

The Communist police wear civilian uniform, drives a big truck “E-Pha truck” or Motor Cycles to collide with Montagnard vehicles.

Major Montagnard Christian Student has obtained degrees MD, Engineering, etc.. The Hanoi authority does not allow these students to have jobs because they are Montagnard and are Christian (race & religious discrimination).

For this reason, I am honored that I have the freedom to share this information, to give another voice to call of support to those who suffered in Vietnam. There are not only Montagnard Tribes people; neither Christian Religious but accountable including all the religious were existing prior to 1975 as Buddhist, Catholic Priest, Cao-dai, Bahaii religion prior to 1975 in Vietnam. The history of repression and human rights abuses has been well documented by Human Rights Watch. (See their report, Vietnam Repression of Montagnard: Lands Grabbing, Church Destruction and Police Abuses in the Central Highland, January 2014, visit the web-site at (www.hrw.org)).

Our people are being tormented; entire populations of the indigenous people are diminishing. Our land, our culture, and our peoples have been wrenched from our bodies and our hearts. We need your help. We need the world to listen. Hanoi need to respect human rights. Will the world tolerate such state-sponsored terrorism? Will we allow yet another ethnic cleansing to be perpetrated against innocent peoples?

Honoured dignitaries, we urge World leaders to revisit the foreign policy questions relating to Vietnam and ask that they consider the hypocrisy displayed by our indifference, our silence. Will we only take leadership when trouble looms on our doorstep or will we come to the aid of those, who are our friends and allies, in their moments of terror?

We would like the following actions to be taken immediately:

1. The Hanoi, killing must be stopped immediately. We desire that an accounting be made of these atrocities and an effort made to identify the victims.
2. The Hanoi, must be trustworthy and give permission to the Religious Leaders as the Pastors, Minister to be independence to government the their Church organization, and be release immediately unharmed and also to permit their churches to gather and worship freely.
3. The Hanoi, must allow theses churches to build places of worship without fear persecution and to own such places of worship. The Church Properties, Mission Center that's include the Biblical School, Christian Clinic where at Banmthuot (Buon Ale “A”), Pleiku, Daknong and Tien-Quan-Thanh (Dalat).
4. Demand to allow training and appointed religious leaders in and out of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to invite religious leaders from other parts of the free world to Vietnam.

5. Demand to return immediately all Christian churches and lands, including artifacts belonging to the Montagnard churches.
6. Demand to release immediately from prison, re-education camp, etc., all the peoples that has been imprisoned or confined because of Christian beliefs.
7. Demand to allow the Montagnard people freely assemble for worship of their choice without persecution.
8. Seek to convince Hanoi that they must address the human rights abuses honestly if they expect us to deal with them in trade and commerce. We must not deal with them without strings attached.
9. Demand that they stop the human rights abuses against the Montagnard immediately and open the Central Highlands to United States, Free-world and United Nations observers as a gesture of good faith that the commitment to human rights protection is sincere.
10. The last and most important demand that we request is that a delegation of United States or UN observers be allowed to move into the Central Highlands area to oversee the process of peaceful transition of Living and Worship. That the delegation be allowed to remain until this process is completed and remain until stability is fully restored. Furthermore, that a party of observers be allowed to live and have free access until the Hanoi government give complete respect and allow the free practice of belief to all citizens in Vietnam.

We need support as there are 478 the fled Thailand and expect to go to third whereas the Community and the Christianity community as well. Among these were 145 the Montagnard Christian, kmher Krom 75 Christian, Hmong 278 and approximately over 500 Vietnamese flee to Thailand. In September 2013, during we're three (3) the representatives of Religious leadership Father Tam (Catholics Priest), Hoang Thich Hong Viet (Buddhist) and Myself (the Protestant Christian) we've visited these people in Thailand. Everybody does want to come to the United States, Canada in free-world where they can be free to practice their belief. Once again, please your heart to bring these Christians people with us in the United States or to Canada.

Montagnards, who traditionally followed animist religious practices, began to convert to Christianity in the 1950s and 1960s. The Montagnards were strong and loyal allies with the U.S. Government during the Vietnam War, and because of that after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975 they have been subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. Since then Montagnards' political and religious leaders have been tortured and imprisoned. The Montagnard's population has been forced for relocations and thousands have been condemned to live in some of the country's poorest cropland. Also their ancestral lands were deforested for logging and being used as rubber plantations.

During the last decade, the Vietnamese government has launched a series of crackdowns on Montagnards in the Central Highlands, often in response to mass public protests calling for the

return of confiscated land and greater religious freedom. The demonstrations have been fueled by Montagnards' growing anger and desperation over the steady loss of their farm land to agricultural plantations and lowland Vietnamese (Kinh) settlers, along with tightened restrictions on independent house churches. Their languages are being lost, and, children shamed into believing they are not worthy. Montagnard prisoners in Hanoi's prisons are not allowed to write letters in the Montagnard language. Montagnard names of rivers, forests, mountains and provinces have been altered into Vietnamese names. This is a policy of quiet genocide and ethnic cleansing targeting Montagnard people.

Authorities have committed clear-cut violations of fundamental rights, including arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, and torture. Officials have employed coercion to pressure Montagnards to renounce their religion and pledge their loyalty to the government and the Communist Party of Vietnam. Police have used excessive force to dispel largely peaceful protests, resulting in the deaths of as many as eight Montagnards during demonstrations in April 2004.

In November 2012 Vietnam police carried out a sweeping operation of about 1,000 soldiers searching for Montagnard Catholics. They found six people. These men were severely beaten. One man was tied to a cross while the others had their hands and feet tied and were surrounding him. The police then rounded up the villagers and threatened them with the same punishment if they continued to carry out their religious beliefs. Government continues to arrest, torture and jail Montagnard Christians.

There are currently over 400 Montagnard Christians imprisoned for their religious beliefs, some of them up to 16 years. Between 2001 and 2004, over 400 Montagnard house churches were taken over by the Vietnamese Government; hundreds of Montagnards were arrested and imprisoned for their participation in demonstrations which related to the policy of land confiscation and religious rights. To this day, many of these house churches still remain closed, and practically all these Montagnard prisoners are still in prison. They are also often forced to renounce their faith. They are beaten, and many put in prison for many years without adequate water, food, medicine and family visits. Many suffer solitary confinement and torture. These conditions have not improved.

Two main areas that continue to experience problems are Pleiku and Buon Ma Thuot. Montagnards asylum seekers have no place to find sanctuary. There are hundreds of Montagnards who are hiding and they are trying to flee persecution. They are hunted down by the police. They are beaten and put in jail.

Xuan, a Montagnard (Ede) asylum seeker, was detained and tortured in 2008 after being escorted to the Vietnamese border from a Phnom Penh refugee camp by UNHCR officials who had rejected his asylum claim. Upon return to Vietnam he was held overnight at Moc Bai border crossing and then transferred to his home province of Dak Lak, where provincial police detained, interrogated and beat him during three days' detention before allowing him to return to his home in Dak Lak. Less than two weeks later he was arrested again and detained at the Dak Lak provincial police station, where he was held incommunicado for a month in a small cell.

“On my first day there I was not given food or water. They wanted me to confess to organizing the demonstrations [among refugees] in Cambodia. In addition to beating me with their hands, their hard-soled shoes, and batons, they used pincers to break my thumb nails and my big toe nails, one nail during each interrogation. I was in much pain.

“Another time they tied a water bottle to my penis. I was made to walk around without spilling water. This was a humiliating experience for me. Still, I did not confess to any other crimes. For over a month I was held in a small room, about two-and-a-half by three meters, made out of concrete. There were bars on top for ventilation and a hole at the bottom of the wall for waste.”

According to the Human Rights Watch World Report, in 2007, the government-recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam reported that a Montagnard Christian of the Ede minority group died in Phu Yen province after being detained and beaten by police for not renouncing his religion. Furthermore according to the U.S. State Department Vietnam Country Report on Human Rights Practices, another Montagnard, Y Ngo Adrong, 49, died on July 13, 2006, several hours after being summoned to the district police station in Ea H’leo, Dak Lak for questioning about international phone calls he had allegedly had with Montagnards abroad. While police claimed that he hanged himself, the U.S. State Department reported that “bruises on his body strongly suggested he died from a beating.

Am Linh, age 71 was arrested under Article 87 for undermining the policy of national unity. A member of the Bahnar ethnic group from Dak Doa district in Gia Lai province, Am Linh was arrested after a protest by Montagnard Christians in April 2008. He was accused of advancing separatist policies as a member of the banned “Tin Lanh Dega” (Dega Protestant) religion.



September 19, 2009: Bao Gia Lai reports on the “Mobile Trial” of three Jarai men on charges of undermining national unity, conducted in Dak Doa district by the Gia Lai Provincial People’s Court. From left: Nhi, 53, sentenced to 10 years in prison; Am Linh, 68, sentenced to eight years; and Yuh, 49, sentenced to eight years.

THE LAY BUDDHIST GROUP

Let us start by examining the status of religious freedom in Vietnam. Is religious freedom in Vietnam a reality or a myth?

On the one hand, we are familiar with the position of the Vietnamese government that they support religious freedom that people are free to practice the religion they like. We have seen much publicized reports and statistics about the exponential growth and prosperity of Buddhist organizations such as:

- Multitude of palatial monasteries constructed;
- Highly publicized participation of Vietnam in world Buddhist events such as the United Nations Vesak 2008 and 2014;



First meeting for the United Nations Vesak 2014

- Millions of members joining the order of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS);
- Large scale gathering for religious and cultural celebration such as Jade Buddha exposition, Vu Lan, ceremony for the death etc.;
- Huge wave of Buddhist monks travelling abroad;
- Highly publicized return of refugee monks such as Thích Nhất Hạnh, Thích Giác Nhiên.



Thich Nhat Hanh look in the air, the birds, the trees, and the lake.



Picture on the left: Thich Nhat Hanh returned to Vietnam to participate the United Nations
Picture on the right: Vesak 2008 Jade Buddha Exposition

On the other hand, there have been numerous calls for help for governments of the free world to redress undeniable injustices and restrictions that point to the fact that religious freedom are a mere facade in this country. Vietnam officially guarantees religious freedom but, as you have heard from other speakers today, Buddhists, Christians, Cao Đài, Hoà Hảo and others have complained of violations to their rights to worship.

We do know the following:

- Religion in Vietnam is controlled by the state. The Head of government religious board is a high ranking official of Ministry of public security (Bộ Công An);
- Only state sponsored organizations such as Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) are allowed to function under the control of the Communist Party (Mặt Trận Tổ Quốc);
- As you have heard today from Venerable Thich Nguyen Thao, representative of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), the oldest and traditionally largest Buddhist organization is not recognized and continues to be subjected to major injustice and restrictions;
- Almost all minority Vietnamese Khmer monks have been persecuted and forced to disrobe;
- No gathering of monks and laypeople are allowed for any religious event if the event is not organized by state- sponsored Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.



Religion in Vietnam is controlled by the state

A two-pronged stick and carrot approach is being executed in Vietnam with disastrous consequences for human rights and religious freedom.

First, the overt stick approach which is used by the dictatorial, one-party government is quite well known today in the West. It consists of repressive policies against all religious groups outside state sponsored organizations in order to imprison and silence all opposing voices. (Reference: presentation by UBCV, by Phật Giáo Hòa Hảo, by Đạo Cao Đài, by Catholic Church etc.).

The second approach, the carrot, is the execution of a more subtle program aimed at controlling and using religious communities to increase the wealth and influence of state-controlled organizations.

The carrot program is a divide and conquer strategy both in Vietnam and in Vietnamese communities outside of Vietnam. For instance, the attached official mandate of a visiting monk from Vietnam (who is actually a member of the police intelligence) states clearly that his responsibilities during a 5 year tour of duty are:

- To create discord in or divide the Vietnamese communities and extinguish any expatriate groups or forces opposed to the Vietnamese communist government;
- To establish educative infrastructure to spread the party's directives in host countries;
- To establish commercial and charitable initiatives to generate financial resources for the communist party.

Multiply the number of visiting monks, nuns by hundreds and thousands, we are seeing many signs that these types of activities are succeeding in Canada and other countries in their goal of dividing secular and religious communities, collecting billions of dollars for party members and using material rewards and the pull of the mother nation to lull people into non caring indifference.

In summary, the Vietnamese government takes a lot of trouble to convince the world opinion that it is respectful of religious freedom whenever they want to be accepted in a world organization such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Country of Particular Concern religious freedom (CPC), etc. Vietnam is currently aspiring to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement – is this a good opportunity to intervene for religious freedom?

Canada has been consistently a strong voice for the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic values. We need your help not only in securing the release of those imprisoned but also in promoting true religious freedom by supporting activities of those religious groups that are oppressed.

We request that Canada speak up assertively to urge the Vietnamese government to repeal decrees or directives on religion which impose restrictions on activities of all religious organizations. We, the concerned Canadian Vietnamese communities, vow to work with Canada to protect human rights and to advance the cause of religious freedom in Vietnam.

BỘ NỘI VỤ
CÔNG AN THÀNH PHỐ

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

PHÒNG PA.18

Số: 0243/CV.

Giấy Công Vụ

PHÒNG PA.18 Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh chứng nhận:

Đồng chí: Đoàn Công Thành

Bí danh: Đồng Điển, Biệt hiệu: Thích Thông-Kinh.

Sanh ngày 26/09/1968, tại Quận Tư, Sài-Gòn.

Hiện thường trú tại: 201-Cầu cống, xã An Khánh, huyện Thủ Đức.

TP. Hồ Chí Minh.

Mật mã số: G24\PA18\R32.

Danh Bộ Đảng Viên Số: 07143\R32\BCT\TG.

Hộ Chiếu xuất, nhập cảnh Số: PT.156937. Ngày cấp: 29/09/1994.

Nơi cấp: TP. Hồ Chí Minh. Được phép đến tất cả các nước.

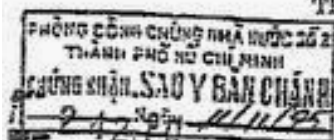
Đồng chí Thành, Được Đảng Bộ cử ra nước ngoài công tác với nhiệm vụ:

- Phân hóa sự đoàn kết chống Cộng Sản các Cộng Đồng và Tôn Giáo, người Việt ở nước ngoài.
- Đặt trụ sở Giáo Dục hoạt động cho Đảng Bộ.
- Tạo cơ sở thương mại xuất-nhập, kinh tài cho Đảng Bộ.

Thời hạn: 5 năm. Có giá trị khi đương sự còn hoạt động ở các nước ngoài.

Đề nghị các đồng chí hiện đang làm việc ở các nước ngoài, tạo điều kiện giúp đỡ đồng chí Thành, được hoàn thành nhiệm vụ Đảng Bộ đã giao phó.

TP. Hồ Chí Minh, Ngày 20 Tháng 7 Năm 1994



TRƯỞNG PHÒNG PA.18



Tham Phan Giao
CÔNG CHỨC VIÊN

**Conclusion:**

Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stipulates that everyone has the right to own property and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her property. The right to speech is enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights; Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights; and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The freedom of religion or belief is protected by:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 10 December 1948 (article 18.)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 16 December 1966.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 21 December 1965.

The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief adopted by the UNGA (resolution 36/55) on 25 November 1981 (article 5)

The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities adopted by the UNGA (resolution 47/135) on 18 December 1992.

The freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief involves giving consideration to persons belonging to religious minorities. These persons have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without any interference or any form of discrimination. The States must therefore protect the existence and religious identity of the minorities within their territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

Constitutionally, citizens have the right to free speech, freedom of religious belief and other human rights. Vietnam's law recognizes freedom of religious. However, despite these written protections for religious freedom, the government continues to violate this freedom in many locations throughout the country. These negative developments highlight the continued validity particularly in light of the General Assembly's November 12, 2013 election to the Human Rights Council, membership of which comes with an obligation to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights."

The Hon. Thanh Hai Ngo

SENATE



CANADA

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L'hon Thanh Hai Ngo

List of Participants

This report is a combined collaboration or submissions from delegations across Canada who participated in a Human Rights Roundtable discussion about Religious Freedom in Vietnam.

Below are the names of those participants

Honoured Guests

The Honourable Senator Thanh Hai Ngo

The Honourable Tim Uppal, Minister of State for Multiculturalism

The Honourable Lois Brown, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development

The Honourable David W. Kilgour, former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and State Secretary for Asia and the Pacific

Mr. Matthew Mayer, Deputy Director and Representative of the Office of Religious Freedom

Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada

Jeff Nankivell, Director-General, Development, Asia-Pacific and acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Asia-Pacific, DFATD

Ms. Evelyn Puxley, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada Southeast Asia & Oceania Relations

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

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Ven. Thich Giac Dang

Diep Trinh

Catholic Delegation

Révérend Abbé Jean-Pierre Lê An-Khang

Dr. Nguyễn quang Hưng

Madame Thi Danh Dang

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Mr. Minh Cam Sinh

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Mr. Dieu Ly Tran

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Mr. Rong Nay

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(Upasaka) Mr. Dang Tan Hau

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