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Vietnam Religious Freedom Roundtable List of Recommendations

On Friday, April 11th, 2014, Senator Thanh Hai Ngo hosted the Vietnam Religious Freedom Roundtable in Ottawa on Parliament Hill with members of Vietnamese religious groups representing the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church and the Montagnard.

The Unified Buddhist Church delegation (3) headed by the Venerable Thich Nguyen Thao, the Catholic Church Delegation (3) headed by Révérend Abbé Jean-Pierre Lê An-Khang, the Cao Dai Delegation (7) headed by Mr. Viet Hung Tran, the Hoa Hao Buddhism Delegation (3) headed by Mr. Hieu Trung Nguyen, the Montagnard delegation (2) headed by Reverend Y Hin Nie, the Lay Buddhist Group of Vietnam (3) headed by Dr. Le Chi Thanh and a delegation of the general Vietnamese-Canadian community(4) headed by Mr. Phat Nguyen submitted detailed recommendations to the Government of Canada regarding the intensifying violation of religious freedom in Vietnam have submitted recommendation to the Government of Canada. The following summary of recommendation is a combination of various requests submitted by the Vietnamese-Canadian religious community asking for improvement for the people of Vietnam's freedom of religions and beliefs.

The distinguished religious members have issued the following 13 recommendation to Canada, asking the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to:

1. Recognize the legitimacy of all these faith groups and allow them to have full freedom of religious activity.
2. Release all clergy and followers imprisoned solely on account of the non-violent exercise or expression of their religious beliefs.
3. Restore all pagodas, temples, churches, monasteries and administrative premises and cultural, social, medical, educational and humanitarian religious institutions confiscated after 1975, as well those in Northern Vietnam confiscated after 1945.
4. Repeal or revise decree 92 and related directives, laws and resolutions which impose restrictions, and control disrupting the activities of independent religious groups by the Vietnamese Communist Party.



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5. 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 by not interfering. In this respect, the Vietnamese Communist Party of Vietnam must truly respect freedom of religion and beliefs by not interfering into internal religious activities and return all religious properties to the independent.
6. To send a Canadian delegation on a fact-finding human rights and religious freedom mission to Vietnam.
7. Setting human rights and religious freedom conditions for Vietnam before providing any foreign aid or approving any further bilateral agreement between Canada and Vietnam.
8. Protecting Vietnamese-Canadians who advocate for democracy, human rights and religious freedom for Vietnam when their life and their families are threatened both in Vietnam and Canada.
9. To call on the Socialist Government of Vietnam to release individuals who have been imprisoned for peacefully exercising their democratic rights.
10. Pressure the Vietnamese government to 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.
11. 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.
 - a. 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.
12. To launch an inquiry, calling the attention of the Senate and the House of Commons to the serious and numerous breaches of basic human rights in Vietnam by the government of the Communist Party of Vietnam.
13. To call on the Vietnamese government to uphold their legal obligations to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, including priests, bloggers and journalists.