



**HOA HAO BUDDHIST CONGREGATION
CENTRAL OVERSEAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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Honorable Samuel D. Brownback
U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious

Subject: Persecution of the Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Dear Ambassador Brownback,

I, Tao Van Nguyen, on behalf of Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation/Central Overseas Executive Committee in the U.S., would like to congratulate you on your tour of duty in Vietnam. I would also like to take this opportunity to solicit your assistance in enforcing religious freedom in line with International Freedom of Religion Laws. I would fervently ask you to help secure the release of incarcerated Hoa Hao believers whose only "crime" is the perseverance in practicing their "Faith" and fighting for their Religious Freedom.

Mr. Ambassador,

As you may have already known, Hoa Hao is one of the four major religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Caodaism and Hoa Hao Buddhism) which has been in existence for a long time. It was estimated that there were 3 millions Hoa Hao believers out of 25 millions South Vietnamese under the Republic of Vietnam and before the fateful day of April 30th, 1975, when the Hoa Hao Church was abruptly and totally dissolved, and now up to 7 millions of Hoa Hao believers. All dignitaries of the Church were sent to "hard labor camps" (which were falsely called re-education camps). All of the Church properties (real properties and all other possession) and religious institutions (school buildings, worship halls) were confiscated. The population in Vietnam has doubled ever since the war end. The number of Hoa Hao believers has expanded to around five to six millions. After 24 years of unsuccessful tactics of eliminating the Hoa Hao church, due to international pressure and the resistance of the majority of believers, the Viet Cong formed a "Representative Committee" on May 25th 1999. This Representative Committee is but a puppet organization, which consists of eleven Communist Party Members, who dictate all policies and who exert absolute control over the believers' activities with harsh measures. The believers are forbidden from:

- Displaying the Church's colors at home,
- Commemorating the "ABSENT" of His Holiness Huynh, who was plotted and harmful by the Communists on April 16th, 1947
- Changed the name "Ancestral Home" to "Worship Place." (Thanks to the followers persistent objections the original name was restored).

- Truncated the "Book of Oracles", which is the Bible of the Hoa Hao Believers. Furthermore, the Viet Cong only allow half of contents of the Book of Oracles to be circulated.
- Refused to return most of the temples that they had confiscated since April 30th, 1975.
- Utterly limited the RC's activities and refused to grant it the legal status similar to that of prior to 1975.
- Changed the historical name of "Hoa Hao" village into "Phu My" town of Phu Tan district.

Mr. Ambassador,

In the past 44 years the Viet Cong appeared to have somewhat loosened its very tight grips on Human Rights and Religious Freedom in order to dupe the public. In reality, totalitarian regime is imposed on people. Activists for "equality" and "freedom" are monitored, arrested, imprisoned and or are brutally murdered.

We would like to ask for your intervention to help secure the release the following "prisoners of conscience.":

1. Nguyen Tan An (born in 1992, An Giang) 5-year prison term.
2. Huynh thi Kim Quyen (born in 1979, An Giang) 4-year prison term.
3. Nguyen Ngoc Quy (born in 1992, An Giang) 3-year prison term.
4. Pham Van Trong (born in 1994, An Giang) 3-year prison term
5. Nguyen Thanh Binh (born in 1994, An Giang) 3-year prison term.
6. Nguyen Bac Truyen (born in 1968, Saigon) 11-year prison term.
7. Bui Van Trung (born in 1962, An Giang) 6-yr prison term.
8. Bui Van Tham (born in 1986, An Giang) 6-year prison term.
9. Vuong Van Tha (born 1969, An Giang 12-year prison term.
10. Vuong Van Thuan (born in 1990, An Giang) 7-year prison term.
11. Nguyen Nhut Truong (born in 1985, Can Tho) 6-year prison term.
12. Nguyen Nhut Thuong (born in 1985, Can Tho) 6-year prison term.
13. Nguyen Hoang Nam (born in 1982, An Giang) 4-year prison term.
14. Le Thi Hong Hanh (born in 1979, An Giang) 3-year prison term

The most barbaric case was that of Mr. Nguyen Huu Tan, who was arrested and killed on May 2, 2017 and whose throat was slit from ear to ear, during an interrogation at the police station in Thanh Duc, town of Binh Minh, Vinh Long province.

The U.S. is the greatest nation on earth for Human Rights and Religious Freedom. We implore that would earnestly help us bring justice to the above mentioned victims. We the Vietnamese Americans respect and admire you and we are forever grateful to you for all of your help to "right" the "wrong".

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

May God Bless You Abundantly,

Sincerely yours,

Tao Van Nguyen

