

LETTER OF PROTEST AGAINST THE LAW ON THE RELIGION 2015

Of the Interfaith Council of Vietnam

- To:**
- The Vietnamese people in Vietnam and overseas.
 - The dignitaries and the faithful of all the religions in Vietnam.
 - The international organizations of Human Rights

On the 17th of April, 2015, the Government Department of Religions sent to 62 religion organizations the 4th Draft of the Law on the Religions (LOR), enclosing a letter to request their opinions which are supposed to be sent back before the 5th of May, 2015.

On this occasion, the Interfaith Council of Vietnam, consisting of the dignitaries of five big religions for the purpose of struggling for the religion freedom, democracy and human rights, would like to present the following comments and requests:

1. Observations

- a- The fact that the government sent the acknowledged religions a too long law document but allowed them a too short time to give their opinions shows the government's contempt for the religions, religious discrimination and a plot to force the religions to do what the communists want.
- b- How can a law on the religious believers made by an atheist government and the officials without religious spiritual experience, even the officials of the Police Ministry?
- c- LOR continues to apply the asking-giving system in which too many kinds of applications are required for the purpose of controlling, restraining and cornering the religions, limiting the religion freedom more strictly.
- d- LOR has been composed with a lot of ambiguous terms and articles which can be freely explained and applied by the local authorities. This will cause prevention of religious practice and help the official to commit bribery.
- e- LOR contains a lot of contradictory articles, especially these articles contradict the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18), and contradict the Constitution of Vietnam (Article 24).

2. Our requests:

- a- The religions must be freely founded and must do their activities themselves. Their legal entity must be acknowledged, and they must be considered as independent civil organization without waiting for the "license" of the government.
- b- The religions must be independent to organize their personnel and structure such as admitting and training their religious, ordaining, assigning, transferring their dignitaries, building and organizing their structure: monasteries, training schools, areas etc.
- c- The religions must be free to publicize their doctrine, contribute to educating young people, take part in health and charity activities. At the same time, the religions must have the rights to establish their publishing and printing houses, radio and television stations, websites to meet their needs.

d- The religions must have the possession of the land. They must be free to give, receive, buy, sell and exchange real estates, to widen or narrow their buildings according to their needs.

e- The religions must have freedom to communicate with their faithful or other individuals and organizations in other countries, to send their members abroad to carry out their activities.

The above rights and freedom are not found in the Draft of the Law on the Religions!

Conclusion:

The religions are naturally the organizations consisting of many faithful and the faithful are the citizens with equality. They have rights and duties as other citizens. These rights and duties are confirmed in the Constitution of Vietnam and other sub-law documents according to the freedom and democracy spirit suitable of the international conventions on the human rights.

Thus, as the spiritual leaders who are struggling for the freedom and independence of the religions as well as the human rights and civil rights of our people, we totally rebut the whole text and every article of the Draft of the Law on the Religions that the Vietnam government has composed with the purpose of using administrative violence to eliminate religions so that they can consolidate the dictatorship of the Vietnam communist party.

Vietnam, May 10, 2015

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