

Policy of the Vietnamese Communist Party and Suppression of Hoa Hao Buddhism (HHB)

To the attention of: U.S. State Department Office on International Religious Freedom

I am Truong Van Thuc, born in 1946. I am a Hoa Hao Buddhist, currently residing in the Hoa Hao Sacred Land in Vietnam. The name of the Sacred Land has been changed to Phu My Town, Phu Tan Rural District, An Giang Province.

It would be an honor for all the Hoa Hao followers and me to meet with your delegation to present the pressure and struggles we have been enduring for 40 years under the strict control of the Vietnamese Communist Government (VCG). You would also like to know what has been happening in reality.

As we cannot present all the issues at once in this limited report, we are submitting a summary of factual evidence that sufficiently demonstrates the detriment and grave danger HHB has been facing. The following facts will help you make a fair and accurate judgment.

To achieve their objective of destroying Hoa Hao Buddhism, the Vietnamese Communists reportedly assassinated Prophet Huynh Giao Chu (Huynh the Religious Leader) in 1947, killed more than 20 thousand HHB followers, and especially executed four religious leaders of HHB in Can Tho in 1945. When the communists took control in 1975, they prohibited all religious activities of HHB, dissolved all central and local Hoa Hao churches, and confiscated entirely their religious properties. In 1999, to protect their political interests, the VCP used their power to create a pseudo-religious organization named "Hoa Hao Central Administrative Council" (HHCAC), often called the state-run church, and a charter to legalize this organization. The formation of HHCAC aims to politicize HHB and deceive the public opinion in and outside the country as well as HHB followers. HHB is facing real danger because HHCAC consists of the following members:

1/ Mr. Nguyen Van Ton: Former Head of HHCAC, 40+-year tenure in the VCP, deceased in 2012.

2/ Mr. Nguyen Tan Dat (see attached photo): Current Head of HHCAC, non-religious, Delegate to the Central Committee of the National Fatherland Front (NFF), National Assembly Representative for 3 terms.

3/ Mr. Nguyen Huy Diem: 20+-year tenure in the VCP, Deputy Permanent of HHCAC, and Head of Religious Teaching Subcommittee.

4/ Mr. Bui Van Duong: Delegate to the NFF in Ha Noi, An Giang Fatherland Front and An Giang People's Council, Deputy of HHAC, and Head of Charitable Social Assistance Subcommittee.

5/ Mr. Nguyen Van Luong: 20+-year tenure in the VCP, Member of Phu Tan District Fatherland Front, Deputy Head of HHCAC, and Head of Organization and Human Resources Subcommittee.

6/ Mr. Nguyen Van Chom: 20+-year tenure in the VCP, former staff of An Giang Province People's Committee Office, transferred to HHCAC as Chief Of Staff for General Affairs.

Local HHCACs have the same organizational structure in over 400 wards and communes.

This type of state-run HHCAC and its pseudo-charter have officially nullified, subverted and distorted the traditional values of the authentic Hoa Hao Buddhism in the following ways:

1/ Hoa Hao Religious Scripture, Teaching and Full Literature written by Prophet Huynh from 1939 – 1947 were cut off more than 100 pages, meaning that they can be printed and published only for the period of 1939 - 1942.

2/ No Memorial Day allowed on the 25th of the second month of the Lunar year to commemorate the disappearance of Prophet Huynh in Doc Vang, Dong Thap Province on the same date in 1947. The Vietnamese Communist government justifies their blanket repression of Hoa Hao Buddhists who celebrate this Memorial Day on the ground of the pseudo-charter of HHCAC.

3/ No provisions recognizing the existence and the spiritual leadership of the Hoa Hao Ancestral Temple.

4/ No sections acknowledging the usurpation of the properties of Hoa Hao Buddhist Church by the Vietnamese Communists after 1975. These properties are currently in the hands of a few powerful members of the Communist Party as their personal belongings or freely transferred/ sold by these people. Many of the worship places of Hoa Hao Buddhism have been vandalized and left abandoned (see attached list).

Aware of our responsibility and in the spirit of respect for our religion and our Master, the communities of Hoa Hao Buddhism in Vietnam and abroad have no other options than fighting at all costs for the preservation of our religious beliefs despite all the hurdles we are facing. So far, this fight is so pricy with numerous sacrifices, deaths, and the condemnation of more than 30 people to long-term sentences. Currently 9 people are still in jail, especially Mrs. Mai Thi Dung who was sentenced to 11 years in 2006. She is currently held in Thanh Xuan jail in Ha Noi. While in the Z30 A prison in Xuan Loc, Dong Nai she was already ill. Her illness has become serious and she is unable to care for herself. She needs help to walk. She is a vegetarian and due to the lack of medications, she is suffering severe malnutrition and weighs less than 40kg. We are calling for your help because Ms. Dung's life is in jeopardy.

Being peasant farmers, we had been taught by Prophet Huynh to solve any issues with others only in a peaceful way. Therefore, we are calling for justice from all the organizations that have been protecting human rights in the world. Please show more concern for the practice of human rights and freedom of religion in Vietnam which has not yet improved in reality.

July 16, 2014 in the Sacred Land of Hoa Hao Buddhism, An Giang Province, Vietnam

Truong Van Thuc (Signed)

214 ấp Trung Thạnh, thị trấn Phú Mỹ, huyện Phú Tân, An Giang. Tel: 0162.616.0165



Họ và tên: Nguyễn Tấn Đạt

Tên thường gọi: Nguyễn Tấn Đạt

Ngày sinh: 6/7/1949

Giới tính: Nam

Dân tộc: Kinh

Quê quán: Xã Hội An Đông, huyện Lấp Vò, Đồng Tháp

Trình độ học vấn: Dưới ĐH

Trình độ chuyên môn: Lương y (giáo viên cấp 1, sư phạm 11 + 2)

Nghề nghiệp, chức vụ (hiện tại): Quyền Trưởng ban trị sự Trung ương Phật giáo Hòa Hảo

Nơi làm việc: An Hòa Tự, thị trấn Phú Mỹ, An Giang

Nơi ứng cử: An Giang

Đại biểu Quốc hội khóa: XI, XII, XIII

Đại biểu chuyên trách: Không

Đại biểu Hội đồng Nhân dân: Không

Name: Nguyen Tan Dat

Usually used name: Nguyen Tan Dat

DOB: July 6, 1949

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Kinh

Hometown: Xa Hoi An Dong, Huyen Lap Vo, Dong Thap

Education level: Below college

Professional level: Herbalist (grade 1 teacher, pedagogy 11 + 2)

Occupation, position (current): Acting Chair of the Hoa Hao Buddhist Administrative Council

Place of work: An Hoa Tu, Phu My City, An Giang Province

Electoral district: An Giang

National Assembly membership term: XI, XII, XIII

Special Duty Delegate: No

Delegate of People's Council: No