

REPORT
Independent Cao Dai Church's Activities from 10/2015 through 02/2016

Respectfully submitted to:

- United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).
- The Honorable David Saperstein, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom.

The Popular Bloc of the Independent Cao Dai Church has prepared the following report on the key developments pertaining to our religious operation and activities:

A/- SYNOPSIS.

The current ruling party in Vietnam established a government-controlled Cao Dai Church on May 9, 1997 as its instrument for destroying the Independent Cao Dai Church (established in 1926). Consequently, the Vietnamese government's direct role in any violation of the Independent Church's religious freedom by the government-owned Church cannot be denied.

I/- Victims of religious suppression are also witnesses

In late September-early October 2015 our Church was represented by 15 members who were going to the Conference on Freedom of Religion and Beliefs in Bangkok (Thai land), but the government stopped 4 from going. After those who managed to go returned, the government harassed 8, and also stopped 2 from subsequent participation in meetings held abroad. We have reported fully on these violations.

II/- Government stopped the Hiep Thien Dai dignitaries from performing their religious function

On October 14, 2015 our Church's Hiep Thien Dai unit gathered at the Hiep Thien Dai office on the grounds of the Tay Ninh Temple to appoint the Hiep Thien Dai governing committee chair, office manager, deputy office manager, and charitable activities officer (without seeking the government's approval). That was our Church's first attempt to conduct religious activities (independently) since 1979. On October 19, 2015 a Popular Bloc delegation paid a visit to the Hiep Thien Dai office. Within 10 minutes members of the security force of the government-owned Church (1997 creation of the government) rushed to the office and forced our Church members to leave.

On October 20, 2015 the government-owned Church closed down the Hiep Thien Dai office.

On October 23, 2015 the government-owned Church expelled the office manager (he was appointed on 10/14/2015) and took over the office (the office manager had been living in the building for many years to maintain the building; the government expelled him as soon as he aligned himself with the Independent Church). We have reported fully on these violations.

III/- Participation on the conference held in Taiwan

The APAC Religious Freedom Forum was held in Taiwan's capital city during 3 days, February 18-21 of 2016. Our Church's Popular Bloc designated Ms. Vo Thi Kim Van as our representative at the Forum.

On February 22, 2016 she returned to Vietnam via Tan Son Nhat Airport without being harassed.

Subsequently, local public security officers came to the building (Rach Ong, District No. 8, Ho Chi Minh City) where she was a renter and asked a guard about Ms. Van. No harassment has been reported.

IV/- Participation on the Multi-Faith Round Table

A number of our Popular Bloc members and well-meaning collaborators established a Multi-Faith Round Table that has met 3 times since the establishment date of February 24, 2016 to develop a code of conduct and mission statement. No harassment has been reported.

V/- Circular No. 42/90: *this document specifies many measures intended to block the Independent Cao Dai Church's religious operation and activities* (Image 1 in Addendum)

On October 14, 2015 the government-owned Cao Dai Church issued Circular No. 42/90 ordering all local Cao Dai branches to unite in preventing the Independent Church from operating.

On November 10, 2015 Mr. Nguyen Van Khanh Em (Internal Affairs Office of Hoa Thanh District government) wrote to local government offices, asking them to coordinate with local church branches to implement the circular's directions.

1/- High Point of Repression

On November 19, 2015 Ms. Nguyen Thi Hong conducted the Statue Installation ceremony at her house in Cay Xieng Hamlet, Dong Khoi Commune, Chau Thanh District, Tay Ninh Province. The government, represented by members of the "113" Public Security Division, traffic police, commune public security, the Hamlet chairman, and militia members (about 50 in all) observed as approximately 300 government-owned church members disrupted the ceremony (they were from the Dong Khoi, Tan Bien, Chau Thanh, Thanh Dien, An Co, Suoi Ong Dinh, Tra Vong, etc. local branches).

We have reported fully on this violation.

2/- Lessening of Repression

After the government's repression was reported to international human rights organizations (with photos as evidence), the Popular Bloc noted a suspension of the government's and the government-owned Church's repression (e.g., no disruption of Statue Installation or funeral rites). However, the Popular Bloc needs to point out that the government may reverse its course anytime because of the non-permanent nature of this decision.

STATUE INSTALLATION CEREMONIES THAT WERE SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED

2.1/ December 28, 2015

At the home of Mr. Nguyen Thanh Liem, Truong Luu local branch, Tay Ninh Province: The government-owned Cao Dai Church's Governing Council voiced their opposition but did not disrupt the rite.

2.2/- January 10, 2016

At the home of Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bay (a 60-year old adherent), Truong Luu local branch, Tay Ninh Province: A few days before the scheduled rite, the Governing Council and the local Rituals Control Unit came to intimidate Mr. Bay in an effort to dissuade him from going ahead. However, when approximately 200 Independent Church members came to attend the ceremony, no disruption occurred.

2.3/- January 12, 2016

At the home of Mr. Vo Tran Van Hieu, Suoi Day local branch, Tan Chau Congregation, the Governing Council and the local Rituals Control Unit of the government-owned Cao Dai Church came to intimidate and dissuade him from going ahead. However, when Independent Church members came to attend the ceremony, no disruption occurred.

2.4/- January 24, 2016

At the home of Ms. Nguyen Thi Hiep (60 years old), Tan Dong Local Branch, Dong 2 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province (formerly Go Cong). The Governing Council complained to the local government and ordered Ms. Hiep to stop. However, they did not disrupt the ceremony.

2.5/- January 27, 2016

At the home of Ms. Huynh Thi Luom (43 years old), Long Chanh local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and ordered Ms. Luom to stop. However, they did not disrupt the ceremony.

2.6 At the home of Ms. Phan Thi Phi (53 years old), Kieng Phuoc local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and ordered Ms. Phi to stop. However, they did not disrupt the ceremony.

2.7/- February 13, 2016

At the home of Mr. Tran Quoc Trinh (76 years old), Suoi Giay local branch, Tan Bien Congregation, Tay Ninh Province. The Governing Council complained to the local government and ordered Mr. Trinh to stop. However, they did not disrupt the ceremony.

2.8/- February 25, 2016

At the home of Mr. Nguyen Van Thuan (62 years old), Area No 2, Town of Tan Chau, Tay Ninh Province: The government sent an invitation to Mr. Thuan to meet on the matter. Public security and the Governing Council's member Thuong Buoc Thanh (government-owned Church) came to Mr. Thuan's home to dissuade him, but the government did not disrupt the ceremony (invitation letter attached as Addendum 2).

2.9/- February 28, 2016

At the home of Mr. Nguyen Tan Ninh (60 years old), Phu Tan local branch, Dinh Quan Congregation, Dong Nai Province: The Governing Council issued threats but did not disrupt the ceremony.

FUNERALS THAT WERE SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED

2.10/- January 14, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Tran Van Lam (83 years old), Long Chanh local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and announced its decision to forbid his burial in the Cao Dai cemetery. However, his family and fellow independent Cao Dai adherents' determination helped them achieve the objective of burying him in the Cao Dai cemetery.

2.11/- January 31, 2016.

Funeral of Mrs. Lai Thi No (78 years old), Rach Ong local branch, Ho Chi Minh City: the Governing Council voiced its opposition but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

2.12/- February 17, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Nguyen Kim Phuong (44 years old), Long Chanh local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and announced its decision to block the funeral but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

2.13/- February 18, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Dinh Van Chuc (80 years old), Long Hoa local branch, local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and announced its decision to block the funeral but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

2.14/ February 21, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Nguyen Van Tuong (45 years old), Long Chanh local branch, Dong 1 District Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council complained to the local government and announced its decision to block the funeral but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

2.15/- February 26, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Nguyen Thanh Phong (41 years old), Ngu Hiep local branch, Cai Lay Congregation, Tien Giang Province: The Governing Council and Rituals Control Unit complained to the local government and announced their decision to block the funeral but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

2.16/- March 5, 2016.

Funeral of Mr. Nguyen Van Trac (89 years old), Binh Hoa local branch, Giong Trom Congregation, Ben Tre Province: The Governing Council and Rituals Control Unit complained to the local government and announced their decision to block the funeral but did not interfere, and the burial was satisfactorily conducted.

OF NOTE:

In the time period listed above, the following activities were conducted in Tien Giang Province: a/- 9-day cycle rite, 200-day rite, and 300-day rite to commemorate 23 deceased adherents.

b/- Provision of 7 caskets.

c/- Also, the Tien Giang Province funeral unit of our Church conducted the dressing, casketing, and burial of 15 people who were not Cao Dai adherents.

B/- CONCLUSION:

It is a fact that the government has been using the Church that it had established on May 9, 1997 as an instrument to continue its implementation of the central government's Cao Dai Decision. Well-meaning supporters of our Church and human rights organizations have been assisting in disseminating evidence to the international community and enabling victims from Vietnam to testify at international conferences. The effective advocacy resulted in the government's restraint. However, the government may choose to escalate its repression anytime. A key test of the government's policy towards the Independent Cao Dai Church is whether it would allow us to hold a Popular Bloc conference in the Tay Ninh Temple.

The conference's religious objective is to appoint religious leaders with the authority to rebuild the Cao Dai Church. The conference's social objective is to demonstrate that the government truly allows freedom of movement, residency, assembly, speech, and the press, and respects cultural rights. The government's respect for freedom of religion can only be proven through allowing the Independent Cao Dai Church to hold the Popular Bloc's Conference. This is a fundamental test.

C/- DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO PRESENT AND DISSEMINATE THIS REPORT

We delegate the authority to present and disseminate this report to:

./- Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang, a U.S. citizen who is the Executive Director of Boat People SOS

./- Ms. Katie Dương, another U.S. citizen, who has been on our External Relations Committee. Her contact information is: tel: 469. 525. 3356/address: 3112 North Jupiter Road, Suite 216, Garland, Texas 75044.

We vouch for the veracity of this report and stand ready to address any question or issue that the Vietnamese government may raise.

Vietnam, March 8, 2016

Executive Committee of the Cao Dai Church's Popular Bloc

Signatures:

Sub-Dignitary (CTS) Võ Văn Quang Tel: 01645 060 679

CTS Trần Quốc Tiến. Tel: 0938 222 409

CTS Trần Ngọc Sương. Tel: 0124 856 3486

CTS Nguyễn Thị Hương. Tel: 01645 060 679

Adherent Dương Xuân Lương. Skype name: johnthu1605.

ADDENDUM

Images of Documents

Addendum 1: Circular No. 42/90

*Committee representing
The Church
Tay Ninh Province
No. 42/90. BDD. VT*

**Church of the Great Way of the Third Age of
Universal Redemption (90th year)
Tay Ninh Temple**

To: Governing committees of 75 local church branches in Tay Ninh Province

The Committee representing the Tay Ninh Temple has received much input from believers and Governing committees of local church branches. In the recent past, a group in Tay Ninh Province proclaimed themselves as “Adherents of the Original, Authentic Church” and conducted rites such as funeral, Taking Position, Statue Installation, Healing Prayers, etc. in the local branches’ communities at the homes of adherents who are less knowledgeable about our Church’s laws and do not understand the principles, procedures, administrative prescription, and rites that the Church has promulgated.

By order of the Tay Ninh Temple and based on the meeting on Day 26 of the 8th lunar month in the Year of the Goat (October 8, 2015) involving the Committee and Governing committee representatives of the 75 local Church branches, during which there was uniform agreement on measures needed to prevent and reverse the violations carried out by the self-proclaimed “Adherents of the Original, Authentic Church”. The measures include:

1/Members of Governing committees, clergy, adherents appointed to functions, and believers shall, upon finding out that those masquerading as Cao Dai adherents or representatives of Tay Ninh Temple are coming to your communities to conduct unauthorized religious operation or activities, should (this applies to Governing committee members and adherents appointed to functions) intervene and provide thorough explanations, and help them obey the Church’s laws. Should the unauthorized group refuse to comply, you shall immediately notify in writing the local government so that it provides you with legal support and enforcement authority.

2/Mobilize and organize intervention by adherents appointed to functions, personnel from the Church’s committees and departments with the intent to disperse and firmly deny the unauthorized group the opportunity to carry out its plans.

3/Notify the nearby branches’ Governing committees and ask for additional personnel to provide support for upholding our Church’s internal solidarity as guided by the Committee representing the Tay Ninh Temple. This is necessary for us to fulfill the mission that the Temple has assigned and uphold the Church’s laws in accordance with the responsibility of clergy members and adherents appointed to functions.

4/Resolutely prevent the self-proclaimed “Adherents of the Original, Authentic Church” from organizing religious activities not authorized by the Church and with the potential to degrade the Cao Dai Church’s authority and prestige.

We ardently desire that Governing committees, clergy, adherents appointed to functions, and believers work closely with one another to implement well the Church’s teachings, maintain order, peace, love, and glory to our Church for this and future generations.

Respectfully,

Tay Ninh,

Day 26 of the 8th lunar month in the Year of the Goat
(October 8, 2015)

Chair of Committee representing the Church

GS Thai Tho Thanh

GS Huong Lan, Deputy Leader of DTNP Committee

Thuong Huu Thanh, Deputy Leader of Cluster 1

Ngoc Hoa Thanh, Deputy Leader of Cluster 2

Thai Tong Thanh, Deputy Leader of Cluster 3

Handwritten note: *Sent to communes and towns for their coordination to implement this Circular.*

Hoa Thanh, November 10, 2015

Nguyen Van Khanh Em

Cc:

Tay Ninh Church (for information)

Religious Affairs Committee, Patriotic Front Committee, Public Security of Tay Ninh

Internal Affairs Office, Patriotic Front Committees of Districts and Towns (for your assistance)

75 local branches (for implementation)

Copy to file

BAN ĐẠI DIỆN HỘI THÁNH

TỈNH TÂY NINH

Số 42/90. BDD. VT

ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỲ PHỔ ĐỘ

(Cửu Thập Niên)

TÒA THÁNH TÂY NINH

PHÒNG NỘI VỤ HOA MIỀN

Số: 294

ĐẾN Ngày: 04/11/2015

Chuyên:

Kính gửi: Ban Cai Quản 75 Họ Đạo trong Tỉnh Tây Ninh.

Ban Đại diện Hội Thánh Tỉnh Tây Ninh nhận nhiều phản ánh của Tín Đồ và các Ban Cai Quản Họ Đạo. Thời gian qua trong địa bàn Tỉnh Tây Ninh có nhóm người tự xưng "Bảo Thủ Chơn Truyền" đến các Họ Đạo tổ chức hành Lễ Tang, An Vị, Thượng Tượng, Cầu Kinh Giải Bệnh cho các gia đình Tín Đồ kém hiểu biết về luật Đạo, không thông hiểu nguyên tắc, thủ tục, hành chánh, Nghi Lễ đạo mà Hội Thánh qui định.

Thực hiện sự chỉ đạo của Hội Thánh Cao Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh và căn cứ tinh thần phiên họp ngày 26 tháng 8 năm Ất Mùi (DL; 08-10-2015) của Ban Đại Diện Hội Thánh và 75 Ban Cai Quản Họ Đạo đồng thống nhất đưa ra các biện pháp ngăn chặn, giải tán các việc làm sai trái của nhóm người tự xưng " Bảo Thủ Chơn Truyền " như Sau:

1/- Các Ban Cai Quản, Chức Sắc, Chức Việc, Tín Đồ phát hiện nhóm người giả danh Người Đạo, Cao Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh đến địa bàn tổ chức hoạt động Tôn giáo trái pháp luật, thì Ban Cai Quản Họ Đạo, Chức Việc đến giải thích cặn kẽ, tạo điều kiện giúp đỡ theo luật đạo, nếu không chấp hành cần báo ngay cho Chính Quyền địa phương (Báo cáo bằng Văn Bản) để được hỗ trợ về tính pháp lý và tư cách pháp nhân.

2/- Vận động, tổ chức lực lượng Chức Việc, Nhân Viên các Ban, Bộ của Đạo đến giải tán nhóm người nói trên bằng nhiều hình thức ngăn chặn, cương quyết không cho họ thực hiện

3/- Thông báo cho các Ban Cai Quản lân cận hỗ trợ về lực lượng, nhân Sự ủng hộ về tinh thần thể hiện mối đoàn kết trong đạo, theo sự hướng dẫn của Ban Đại Diện Hội Thánh Tỉnh Tây Ninh giúp nhau hoàn thành nhiệm vụ Hội Thánh giao và thực thi pháp Luật Đạo đã qui định cho Chức Sắc, Chức Việc trong phạm vi trách nhiệm.

4/- Cương quyết không để cho nhóm người tự xưng " Bảo Thủ Chơn Tru
" tổ chức các hoạt động Tôn giáo trái với Pháp Chánh Truyền và luật đạo làm ảnh
hưởng sự uy nghiêm của Tôn Giáo Cao Đài .

Rất mong các Ban Cai Quản Họ Đạo, Chức Sắc, Chức Việc, và đồng Đạo
đoàn kết, cùng nhau thực hiện tốt lời dạy của Hội Thánh và giữ gìn trật tự, kỷ cương,
đem lại thương yêu, hòa ái, vẻ vang nền đạo cho thế hệ hiện tại và tương lai.

Nay kính

Tây Ninh ngày 02 tháng 9 năm Ất Mùi
(DL: 14-10-2015)

PHÓ BAN ĐTNP

BAN ĐẠI DIỆN HỘI THÁNH



Giáo Sư HƯƠNG LAN

PHÓ BAN CỤM 1

PHÓ BAN CỤM 2

Giáo Sư THÁI THỌ THANH

PHÓ BAN CỤM 3

Giáo Hữu THƯỢNG HỮU THANH Giáo Hữu NGỌC HÒA THANH Giáo Hữu THÁI TỔNG THANH

NƠI NHẬN

- Hội Thánh " Kính Tường "
- Ban Tôn Giáo, UBMTTQ , Công An Tỉnh Tây Ninh
- Phòng Nội Vụ, UBMTTQ các Huyện, Thành Phố
- " Vui lòng giúp đỡ "
- 75 Họ Đạo " để thực hiện "
- Lưu V/p

Mời gửi các xã, thị trấn phối hợp thực hiện
theo nội dung Công văn này.

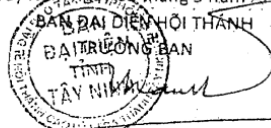
Hòa Thành, ngày 10/11/2015

Nguyễn Văn Khanh Em

DANH SÁCH CHIA CỤM HỖ TRỢ THỰC HIỆN VĂN THƯ SỐ 42/90. BDD

CỤM: 1	CỤM: 2
Họ Đạo Trường Lưu	Họ Đạo Hiệp Hòa
Họ Đạo Trường Hòa	Họ Đạo Hiệp An
Họ Đạo Trường Ân	Họ Đạo Hiệp Định
Họ Đạo LX. Trường Tây & Long Thành Bắc	Họ Đạo Hiệp Long
Họ Đạo Long Mãi	Họ Đạo Hiệp Ninh
Họ Đạo Long Thành Nam	Họ Đạo Long Thành Trung
CỤM: 3	CỤM: 4
Họ Đạo Thanh Tân	Họ Đạo LX. Thị Trấn & Long Thành Bắc
Họ Đạo Ninh Sơn	Họ Đạo Phước Vĩnh
Họ Đạo Ninh Hòa	Họ Đạo An Cơ
Họ Đạo Ninh Phước	Họ Đạo Hảo Đức
Họ Đạo Tấn Bình	Họ Đạo Tủa Hai
Họ Đạo Thành Phố Tây Ninh	Họ Đạo Đồng Khởi
Họ Đạo Bình Minh	CỤM: 5
CỤM: 6	Họ Đạo Thái Bình
Họ Đạo Trà Vong	Họ Đạo Trí Bình
Họ Đạo Tấn Biên	Họ Đạo Thành Long
Họ Đạo LX. Thị Trấn & Thanh Tây	Họ Đạo Long Vĩnh
Họ Đạo LX. Thanh Bình & Thanh Bắc	Họ Đạo Thanh Diên
CỤM: 7	Họ Đạo Ninh Diên
Họ Đạo LX. Tân Hưng & Tân Phú	CỤM: 8
Họ Đạo LX. Tân Hiệp & Tân Châu	Họ Đạo Chà Là
Họ Đạo Suối Dây	Họ Đạo Cầu Khởi
Họ Đạo Tấn Thành	Họ Đạo Trường Mít
Họ Đạo LX. Suối Ngõ & Tân Hòa	Họ Đạo Lộc Ninh
CỤM: 9	Họ Đạo Bến Củi
Họ Đạo Bàu Năng	CỤM: 10
Họ Đạo Xã Phan	Họ Đạo Long Chữ
Họ Đạo Suối Đá	Họ Đạo Long Giang
Họ Đạo Phước Ninh	Họ Đạo Long Khánh
Họ Đạo Phước Minh	Họ Đạo Long Thuận
CỤM: 12	Họ Đạo Tiên Thuận
Họ Đạo LX. Thị Trấn Trảng Bàng & Gia Lộc	CỤM: 11
Họ Đạo Gia Bình	Họ Đạo Lợi Thuận
Họ Đạo An Hòa	Họ Đạo An Thạnh
Họ Đạo An Thới	Họ Đạo Phước Lưu
CỤM: 13	Họ Đạo Bình Thạnh
Họ Đạo Lộc Hưng	CỤM: 14
Họ Đạo Hưng Thuận	Họ Đạo Bàu Đồn Ấp 1
Họ Đạo Đồn Thuận	Họ Đạo Bàu Đồn Ấp 5
CỤM: 15	Họ Đạo Phước Đồng
Họ Đạo Cẩm Giang	CỤM: 16
Họ Đạo Thạnh Đức	Họ Đạo Thạnh Phước
Họ Đạo Hiệp Thạnh	Họ Đạo Thị Trấn Gò Dầu
	Họ Đạo Phước Trạch

Tây Ninh, ngày 02 tháng 9 năm Ất Mùi

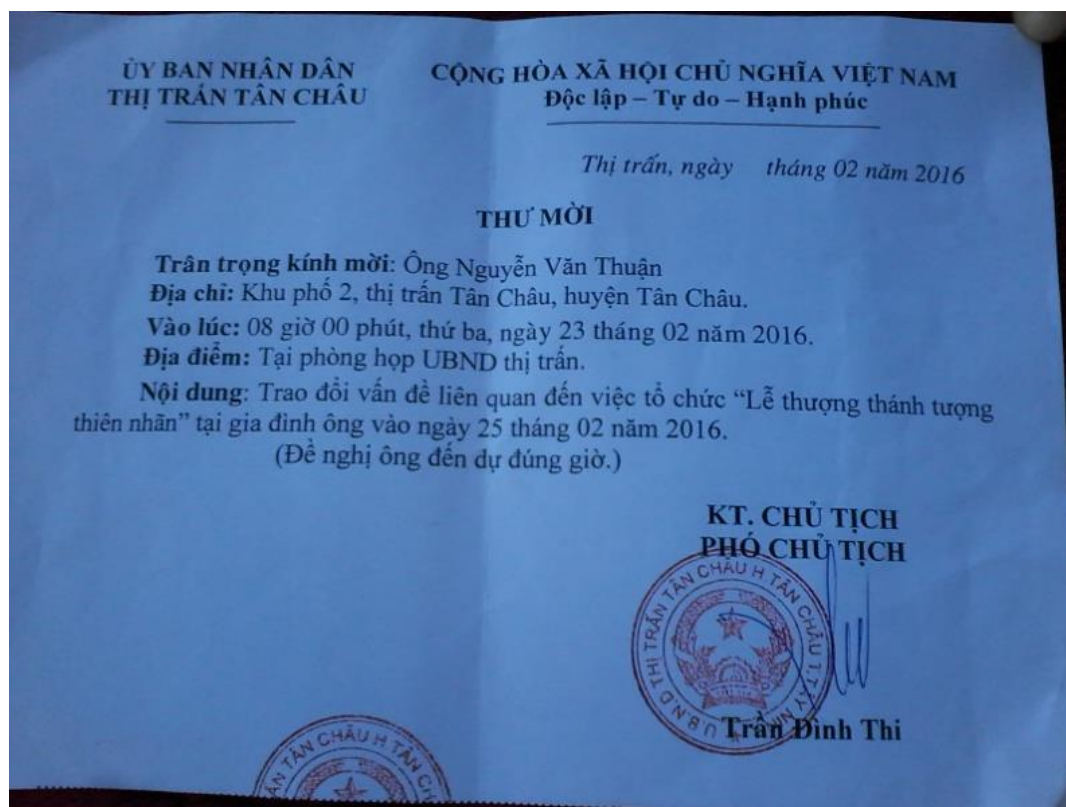


Giáo Sư. THÁI THỌ THANH

List of Cluster Assignment to Implement Circular 42/90 (listing the 75 local branches in Tay Ninh Province grouped into 16 clusters)

Signed by GS Thai Tho Thanh (with seal)

Addendum 2



PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE
TOWN OF TAN CHAU

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Independence – Liberty – Happiness

February , 2016

INVITATION LETTER

We respectfully invite: Mr. Nguyen Van Thuan

Address: KP2, Town of Tan Chau, Tan Chau District

Time: 8:00 am, Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Location: Conference room of the Town People's Committee

Topic: discuss issues related to your planned ceremony for “installing the divine statue” at your residence on February 25, 2016.

(Please be on time)

For the Chairman,
Deputy Chairman
Tran Dinh Thi