

**Report on Vietnamese Government's Suppression of Religious Freedom
for the Third Universal Redemption (Cao Dai) Church**

91st Year - TAY NINH TEMPLE

We, Members of Clergy, Adherents with Assigned Church Functions, and other Adherents of the Original Tay Ninh Cao Dai Church,

Respectfully submit this report to

- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- The United States Congress and Executive Branch.

Subject: Government-controlled Cao Dai Church under Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam and public security forces interfered with our Ceremony to place the Remains of Enlightened Lady That Nuong Dieu Tri Cung **Vuong Thi Le** at Tri Hue Palace's Bao An Hall.

(1) General Information

We, the undersigned, are members of clergy, adherents with assigned Church functions, and other adherents of the Original Tay Ninh Cao Dai Church, based either in Vietnam or the U.S., wish you good health and happiness. We would also like to inform you of the suppression of our Church's religious freedom by the Vietnamese government and its creature, the Cao Dai Governing Council (Cao Dai Church created and controlled by the government through a 1997 charter prepared by 11 Communists).

April 6, 2016 Incident Summary:

On April 6, 2016 (2/29 Year of the Monkey) our Church organized a ceremony to commemorate and place the Remains of Enlightened Lady That Nuong Dieu Tri Cung **Vuong Thi Le** and those of 12 of her relatives at Tri Hue Palace's Bao An Hall. She was the first Enlightened One to light the torch that blazed the way for our nascent Church and was greatly effective in establishing our Church.

(This exercise of our Original Cao Dai Church's freedom of religion should not have had any effect on the Governing Council and the government because all we tried to do was to express reverence for our Church predecessors. Bao An Hall is where we worship those who did great things for the Church and humanity, according to our religious tradition. The government and its controlled Church violated international covenant articles and Vietnam's Constitution and laws when they interfered).

-Does the incident involve an individual or a group?

A group.

-If it involves a religious or belief group, please state the number of people involved and the denomination of the group

- Approximately dozens of members of the Original Cao Dai Church on April 2 and April 3, around 3000 on April 6, and 8 on April 10 and April 11.

-Country(ies) in which the incident took place: Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam.

-Nationality(ies) of the victim(s)

- All are mainstream ethnic Vietnamese citizens

-Does domestic law require (re-) registration of religious associations and if yes, what is the current status of the group in question?

- The 2004 Ordinance on Religion and Beliefs requires all religious organizations to register. When our Church tried to register, the Ordinance's requirements for us amounted to modifying our belief and no longer following the Original Cao Dai belief. This violates God's instruction and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). As the Original Cao Dai Church's adherents, we do not want to change our belief and consequently have not been able to register for religious operation.

(2). Identity of the Persons Concerned

-Note: if more than one person is concerned; please attach relevant information on each person separately.

Members of the ceremony organization committee:

- 1.
- Family name: Phung
- First name: Phan
- Denomination of his/her religion or belief: Original Cao Dai Church

- Place of residence or origin: 717 Nam Trai Hamlet, Truong Dong Commune, HoaThanh District, Tay Ninh Province.
- Birth date:
- Gender: male
- Nationality(ies): Vietnamese

Note: The addendum contains the complete list of victims.

Persons authorized to represent victims:

- Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang, an American citizen who is the Executive Director of Boat People SOS.
- Administrative group (all are U.S. citizens) at Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temples of Texas (Mountain View Temple). 5535 W. Ledbetter Dr, Dallas, Texas 75236. Tel: 972-780-4706.
- Student-Level Female Adherent Muoi Huong Le, spiritual leader, Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temples of Texas, Tel: 972-780-4706. Email: huongmuoile@gmail.com
- Acting Sub-dignitary Quan Van Bui. 5535 W. Ledbetter Dr. Dallas, TX 75236, Tel: 214-606-7697, Email: holonamtu@yahoo.com
- Acting Sub-dignitary Huu Phu Le. 5535 W. Ledbetter Dr. Dallas, TX 75236, Tel: 972-489-5639, Email: lephuhuu_2011@yahoo.com
- Acting Thông-Sự Dao Minh Le. Tel: 469-879-5788, Email: minhdao@daocaodai.org

(3). Information regarding the alleged violation

-Date and time (approximate, if exact date is not known)

In the morning of April 2, 2016.

- Place (location and country/countries)

Truong Xuan Hamlet, Truong Hoa Commune, Hoa Thanh District, Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam

- Please provide a detailed description of the circumstances of the incident in which the alleged violation occurred and the nature of the government action:

Summary of the Religious Activity of Members of the Original Cao Dai Church preceding the first violation of freedom of religion

We moved the remains of the Enlightened One and her 12 relatives. Reason: the remains had been kept at Hue Nghiem Temple in Ho Chi Minh City and that temple was undergoing renovation; the Temple Head and the Enlightened One's descendants authorized us to move the remains to another location (attached statements by the Temple Head and relatives). On March 16, 2016 the remains of Enlightened Lady That Nuong Dieu Tri Cung **Vuong Thi Le** and those of 12 of her relatives were moved to Tri Hue Palace's Bao An Hall in Truong Xuan Hamlet, Truong Hoa Commune, Hoa Thanh District, Tay Ninh Province.

In the morning of April 2, 2016, Teacher-Level Adherent Thai Tho Thanh, an adherent of the government-owned Cao Dai Church, led members of the Committee of Representatives of the government-owned Church on a visit to the management office of Tri Hue Palace.

The government side tried to pressure Mr. Nguyen Hoang Hong, the chairman of the Committee for Ceremonies of Commemoration and Placement of Sacred Articles, to return the 13 remains to their original site. This was a violation of Vietnam's laws and Constitution with respect to freedom of religion and beliefs. Government employees also came (they prevented us from taking pictures or video clips).

Province-level officials included:

- Senior Lieutenant Colonel Ha, Head of the Political Security Office of the province
- Lieutenant Colonel Loi, Security Office of the province
- Two other officials whose names we do not know.

District-level officials included:

- Mr. Tran The Hieu, Interior Affairs Branch of Hoa Thanh District
- Mrs. Nguyen Thi Phuong, Interior Affairs Branch of Hoa Thanh District

Commune-level officials included:

- Mr. Nguyen Van Huu, commune government chairman
- Mr. Pham Ngoc Bao, commune Fatherland Front chairman

The government-owned Church representatives included among them Teacher-Level Adherent Thai Tho Thanh.

In the morning of April 2, 2016, the Governing Council's representatives sent two dozen burial attendants (dressed in traditional black) to Bao An Hall. The attendants wanted to break the lock and seize the Enlightened One's remains. However, Original Church adherents prevented them from doing so.

On April 3, 2016, the Governing Council again pressured Mr. Nguyen Hoang Hong into returning the 13 remains to Hue Nghiem Temple. Original Church adherents from various locations came in time with a petition with 444 signatures seeking for the remains to be kept at Bao An Hall - addressed to the Tri Hue Palace's administrative committee – where adherents will pay tribute to the Enlightened One who had lit the first torch in the initial phase of the Original Church's development.

Subsequent actions by the Governing Council showed that this government-owned Church was implementing Circular 42/90BĐĐ/VT issued on October 14, 2015 (the circular directed people to prevent the Original Church's adherents from any religious operation -circular attached).

In the morning of April 3, 2016, the Governing Council ordered the Committee of Representatives from the management groups of the various branches of the government-owned Church to coordinate with the Security Force for the Temple, under government-owned Church adherent Thai Binh Thanh's command, to force their way into Bao An Hall and seize the remains. Again, the Original Church's adherents foiled their attempt.

Government-owned Church participants in the forced entry included:

- 1/- Adherent Thai Binh Thanh, leader
- 2/- Adherent Thuong Hung Thanh, Manager of the Temple in Truong Hoa
- 3/- Adherent Thuong Hoa Thanh, Deputy Chair of the Committee of Representatives (government-owned Church)
- 4/- Student-Level Adherent Thai Trung Thanh, Deputy Manager of the Temple in Mo Cong

April 6, 2016: Ceremony to Commemorate and Place the Enlightened One's Remains and those of her 12 relatives:

On April 6, the Original Church's High Council members whose task was to organize the ceremony coordinated with clergy members from Cuu Trung Council, Phuoc Thien, The Dao Committee, and representatives of the three palaces (Van Phap, Tri Giac, and Tri Hue). They were joined by approximately 3000 Original Church adherents from various locations. The ceremony began in an orderly and solemn manner. As the ceremony concluded, we heard that the government-owned Church was sending thugs to Bao An Hall to seize the Enlightened One's remains. Our adherents stood guard day and night to prevent the violation (photos at daocaodaittn.org).

April 10, 2016: At 10:15 p.m. about 8 public security officers from the Truong Hoa Commune public security station came to Bao An Hall. They said they were checking the identity of people to see if it matches their residency permits. The officers took 8 persons' ID cards while requesting them to report to the office of the commune government at 8 a.m. on the following day for an interrogation session. (Requesting letter and list of the 8 victims are attached).

Public security officers who confiscated the 8 ID cards on April 10:

Nguyễn Minh Tấn, Truong Hoa Commune Station, Deputy Chief.

Nguyễn Hoàng Huấn, Truong Hoa Commune Station, officer. Nguyễn Văn An, Truong Xuan Hamlet Station, Truong Hoa Commune, Leader of Quad No. 3.

April 11, 2016: At 8:00 a.m. the 8 victims went to the local government's office where officials gave them a warning and tried to pressure them into registering for religious operation (on the government's terms). Eventually the officials returned their ID cards.

Within 15 minutes on April 11, the government-owned Church issued Bulletin No. 01/91/HT-TT to spread disinformation aimed at inciting Cao Dai adherents who did not have a good grasp of the situation, in order to set the stage for the government's next round of attack on a larger scale. The bulletin asked the government-owned Church's clergy, adherents with assigned religious functions, and other adherents to neutralize all the Original Church's adherents (bulletin attached).

- Which indications exist that the victim(s) has been targeted because of his/her religion or belief?

Government officials and members of the government-owned Church pressured the Original Church's adherents to submit to the government-owned Church (established in 1997 versus the Original Church established in 1926). We did not comply and therefore they have been intimidating and attacking us. In doing so, they have violated Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Articles 14 and 24 of Vietnam's 2013 Constitution; Article 1 of the 2004 Ordinance, and Article 2 of Decree No. 92. Furthermore, Circular

42/90 issued by the government-owned Church on October 14, 2015 (with the government's written consent) calls for the use of force as needed to stop the Original Church's adherents from conducting any religious operation (Circular 42/90 attached).

- Identification of the alleged perpetrator(s), name(s) if known and/or function, suspected motive:

Are the perpetrator(s) known to the victim? Yes, we know the names of a number of them.

- Are State agents or non-State-actors believed to be responsible for the alleged violation? State agents are responsible, based on their uniforms and/or other identification.

- If the perpetrators are believed to be State agents, please specify (police, military, agents of security services, unit to which they belong, rank and functions, etc.), and indicate why they are believed to be responsible; be as precise as possible.

See previous pages listing of perpetrators.

- If identification as State agents is not possible, do you believe that government authorities or persons linked to them are responsible for the incident? Why?

Not applicable because it is clear that State agents committed the violations.

- If there are witnesses to the incident, indicate their names, ages, relationship, and contact addresses. If they wish to remain anonymous, indicate if they are relatives, by-passers, etc.; if there is evidence, please specify.

Witnesses included victims listed in the addendum.

(4). Steps taken by the victim, his/her family, or anyone else on his/her behalf?

- Please indicate if complaints have been filed, when, by whom, and before which State authorities or competent bodies (i.e., police, prosecutor, court, etc.).

None

- Were there any other steps taken?

None.

- Steps taken by the authorities:

None.

- Indicate whether or not, to your knowledge, there have been investigations by the State authorities; if so, what kind of investigations? Please indicate progress and status of these investigations as well as which other measures have been taken. None

- In case of complaints by the victim or his family, how have those authorities or other competent bodies dealt with them? What has been the outcome of those proceedings?

Not applicable.

(5). Identity of the person or institution submitting this form:

- Family name: _____ (edited out for security reason)

- Middle name, given name: _____

- Contact number or address (please indicate country and area code): telephone:

- Status: a civil society organization?

Do you act with knowledge and on behalf of the victim(s)? Yes.

Please state whether you want your identity to be kept confidential: No

Date you are submitting this form: May 3, 2016.

Signature of the authors of the report:

We would like the UN and the U.S. Congress and Executive Branch to know the truth so that you will pressure the Communist government of Vietnam to act as required by international covenants, and enable freedom of religion and beliefs. Also, the government-owned Church should not interfere with our religious activities because such interference negatively affects religious activities and public order and safety. We have total faith in the UN and U.S.'s belief in justice, compassion, and fairness.

Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temple, April 20, 2016.

On behalf of adherents of the Original Cao Dai Church

In Vietnam:

Outside Vietnam:

1. Sĩ-Tải Phung-Văn-Phan

1- Lê-Sanh Lê-Hương-Muội

2. Giáo-Thiện Trần-Hữu-Hạnh

2- Quyền Chánh-Trị-Sự Bùi-Văn-Quan

3. Chánh-Trị-Sự Hà Thế-Nêu

3- Quyền Chánh-Trị-Sự Lê-Phú-Hữu

4. Nguyễn-Hoàng-Hồng

4- Quyền Thông-Sự Lê-Minh-Đạo

Photos and video clips showing the suppression by public security officers and the government-owned Cao Dai Church are at daocaodaittn.org.

Addendum: List of Victims (all are Original Cao Dai Church adherents and Vietnamese citizens)

Adherents who fetched the Enlightened Lady That Nuong's remains: Note: the remains had already been moved to Bao An Hall on March 16, before the government started to harass – so, if the victims listed below had been victims in a subsequent violation, we should list them as victims under that violation – not here. This list is not a list of victims because the government did not interfere on March 16.

1/- Hà (family name) Ngọc Voi (given name), male, address: Long Mỹ Hamlet, Long Thành Bắc Commune, Hòa Thành District, Tây Ninh Province.

2/- Trần (family name) Hay Trường-Thiện (given name), male, address: Khu phố Hiệp-Bình, Hiệp-Ninh Ward, Town of Tây Ninh.

3/- Trần (family name) Thị Đẹp (given name), female.

4/- Nguyễn (family name) Thị Huỳnh-Mai (given name), female, address: Thạnh Bình Hamlet, Town of Gò Dầu, Tây Ninh

5/- Nguyễn (family name) Hoàng Hồng (given name), male, address: Trí Huệ Palace

Adherents on the ceremony planning and execution committee:

6/- Giáo Thiện Trần (family name), Hữu Hạnh (given name), male, address: D2/3 Trường Cửu Hamlet, Trường Hòa Commune, Hòa Thành District, Tây Ninh Province.

7/- Sub-Dignitary Hà (family name) Thế Nêu (given name), male, address: 48 Long Hòa Hamlet, Long Chử Commune, Bến Cầu District, Tây Ninh.

8/- Nguyễn (family name) Hoàng Hồng (given name), male, address: Trí Huệ Palace

Adherents who participated in the ceremony at Tri Hue Palace:

The 8 adherents whose ID cards were confiscated at Tri Hue Palace at 10:15 p.m on April 10, 2016:

1/- Nguyễn (family name) Thị Huỳnh-Mai (given name), female, born in 1966, address: Thanh Bình Hamlet, Gò Dầu District, Tây Ninh.

2/- Trần (family name) Thị Sáu (given name), female, born in 1946, address: Hamlet 4, Suối Dây Commune, Tân Châu District, Tây Ninh.

3/- Nguyễn (family name) Thị Đầm (given name), female, born in 1946, address: Hamlet 1, Phước Dân Commune, Cần Đức District, Long An Province.

4/- Đoàn (family name) thị Kim-Liên (given name), female, born in 1946, address: Long Bình Hamlet, Long Thành Nam Commune, Hòa Thành District, Tây Ninh.

5/- Nguyễn (family name) Thị Hương (given name), female, born in 1964, address: An-Thịnh Commune, An Phú, An Giang Province.

6/- Hà (family name) Văn Mân (given name), male, born in 1968, address: Minh Phú Hamlet, Bàu Năng Commune, Dương Minh Châu District, Tây Ninh.

7/- Nguyễn (family name) Quách Nhật-Huy (given name), male, born in 1982, address: Long Thới Hamlet, Long Thành Trung Commune, Hòa Thành District, Tây Ninh.

8/- Lê Văn Thích, male, born in 1980, address: Hiệp Thạnh Hamlet, Hiệp Ninh Commune, Town of Tây Ninh.