



HOA HAO BUDDHIST CONGREGATION CENTRAL OVERSEAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Hoa-Hao Buddhism was founded in 1939 by Prophet Huynh Phu So, at Hoa-Hao village in An Giang province, South Vietnam. Hoa-Hao Buddhism currently has more than 6 millions followers, most of whom live in the Mekong Delta, the rice granary of Vietnam. The Hoa-Hao Buddhists form civic organizations to serve humanity and practice their faith.

For more than 30 years, the Vietnamese Communist authorities have laid out campaigns of extermination and destruction of Hoa-Hao Buddhist independent practice. They have confiscated Church's properties, books, tapes; and harassed, assaulted, incarcerated many Hoa-Hao Buddhist leaders and members.

We would like to bring to your attention and ask for your intervention on the following most recent cases:

1. **Bui Van Trung, his family and fellow Hoa Hao Buddhist followers** – On February 9th, 2018, four family members belonging to an unofficial branch of Vietnam's Hoa Hao Buddhist community were convicted on charges of disrupting public order during the protest at their home last year.

Bui Van Trung and his son Bui Van Tham were sentenced to six years in prison. Trung's daughter Bui Thi Bich Tuyen was sentenced to three years, and his wife Le Thi Hen was sentenced to two years of house arrest.

Family friends and co-religionists Nguyen Hoang Nam and Le Thi Hong Hanh were also convicted in the case and were sentenced to four and three years respectively.

Arrested last year - On the evening of April 18, 2017, traffic police and men in civilian clothes set up a checkpoint near Bui Van Trung's house in An Phu district, An Giang province, to stop independent Hoa Hao Buddhist followers who came to attend the anniversary commemoration of Bui Van Trung's mother's death. The police stopped people from attending and confiscated their papers. Men in civilian clothes cursed and threatened to beat them while traffic police did not intervene. This appeared to follow a pattern of plainclothes 'thugs' being used by police for intimidation.

When Trung's son Bui Van Tham tried to stop the men from taking the motorbikes, they beat him.

In response, Trung and dozens of Hoa Hao Buddhist followers staged a public demonstration to protest the government repression. Bui Van Tham was later charged with "disrupting public order" under article 245 of the criminal code and "resisting people on public duty" under article 257. The other five were charged with "disrupting public order." Trung and his son Tham are former prisoners of conscience.

2. **Nguyen Bac Truyen** – Early in the morning of July 30, 2017 Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen was abducted by Vietnamese police while waiting for his wife outside the Catholic Redemptorist Church in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), where both had worked since 2014. A few hours later, the website of the Ministry of Public Security announced that Truyen had been arrested on the charge of "acting to overthrow the people's government", which is punishable by death or by life imprisonment.

This allegation grossly mischaracterizes the nature of Truyen's activism. After marrying his wife in 2014, Truyen converted to Hoa Hao Buddhism and has since focused all his efforts on defending and promoting religious freedom. He has documented many human rights violations committed against Hoa Hao

Buddhists and submitted these reports to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB), including the report on the death in police custody of Nguyen Huu Tan (see below). He has provided pro bono legal assistance and training on basic human and civil rights to Catholics, Hoa Hao Buddhists, Hmong and Montagnard Christians, and Cao Dai followers.

Truyen has been held without legal representation since his re-arrest on July 30 2017. Nearly three weeks after Truyen's arrest, a single letter was sent to his wife by the Security Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security in response to her two requests for information about his whereabouts. The letter said Truyen was being held at Detention Center B14 in Hanoi (1600 km away from where he was apprehended).

3. **The Death of Nguyen Huu Tan** – Mr. Nguyen Huu Tan, was from a family with a long history of religious persecution that lasts 3 generations. Both of his paternal grandparents were killed by the communist authorities due to their religious belief. Tan's parents are independent Hoa Hao Buddhists who refused to join the local chapter of the state-sponsored Hoa Hao Administrative Council. As a result, his family often suffers from intimidation and harassment by local authorities.

In the morning of May 2, 2017, Mr. Nguyen Huu Tan, was abducted by the Vietnamese police. That evening, about two hundred plainclothes and uniformed police escorted him home, surrounded the house, blocked off the streets, and conducted a house search that lasted several hours. He was accused of disseminating anti-State documents under Article 88 of the country's Penal Code. Even though the police did not find any evidence to substantiate their accusation, they read the Urgent Arrest Notice and took the victim away shortly after midnight. He was detained at the Temporary Detention Center of Vinh Long Provincial Police Department.

Less than 10 hours later (May 3), the victim died with multiple fatal injuries: a cut on his throat that was almost from ear to ear; the gap of the cut was about 2 inches, his windpipe severed, his neck bone exposed. There was a bruise on the victim's forehead; his skull, left temple and the back of his head was mushed.

Vinh Long police continue to intensify their threats against the victim's family. Security cameras are installed around the house to monitor the movements and activities of family members. Several police checkpoints are set up near the house and police come almost daily threatening to arrest all adult members of the family for conducting anti-state activities. The police pressure the victim's family to accept the police's conclusion that suicide was the cause of death and to end the quest for a thorough investigation into his death.

The entire family is extremely frightened and fearing for their lives. The victim's mother and two of the three surviving brothers had to flee home and are now living in exile in their own country.

PLEASE TAKE ACTIONS TO HELP THE VICTIMS:

We ask the U.S. State Department to call on Vietnam to:

1. Annul the sentences against Bui Van Trung and fellow Hoa Hao Buddhists, and immediately allow Bui Van Trung access medical treatment for his eye problem.
2. Allow Nguyen Bac Truyen access to legal representation.
3. Stop all forms of harassment on Mr. Nguyen Huu Tan's family so that they can come home and resume their normal lives.