

## **Joint submission on FORB in Vietnam by:**

**Buddhist Solidarity Association  
Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation Central Overseas Executive Committee  
Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Cao Dai Religion  
Hmong United for Justice  
Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ**

**Universal Periodic Review submission  
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### ***Methodology and consultation process***

1. This joint submission addresses the following recommendations from Vietnam's 2014 UPR: 143.140 (Singapore), 143.141 (United Arab Emirates), 143.142 (Italy), 143.143 (Canada), 143.160 (Czech Republic), 143.213 (Cabo Verde), and 143.214 (Mexico).
2. Contributions to this joint submission were compiled by BPSOS – Religious Freedom Project from the following organizations:
  - Buddhist Solidarity Association
  - Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation Central Overseas Executive Committee
  - Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Cao Dai Religion
  - Hmong United for Justice
  - Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ

### ***Developments since the 2014 UPR***

3. Vietnam's National Assembly passed the country's first Law on Belief and Religion on November 18, 2016. It took effect on January 1, 2018. On December 30, 2017, the State issued implementing Decree No. 162/2017/ND-CP.
4. This law expands the space for registered religious organizations to operate in. For example, it reduces the waiting period from 23 years to five years for a registered religious group to apply for recognition. It grants registered and recognized religious groups legal personality.
5. On the other hand, it places greater restrictions against non-registered, independent religions. Namely, it restrictively defines a religious adherent as one who is recognized by a religious organization, and a religious organization as "a group of people... which is recognized by the government"; this leaves members of religious organizations who cannot or choose not to register with the authorities in a legal limbo, with no legal safeguards for conducting religious activities. They may not even be treated as religious adherents under the new law.
6. The law restricts the definition of "belief" to traditional customs and habits, excluding all other forms of beliefs. This is a major deviation from the standard definition used in Article 18 of the ICCPR.
7. The new law perpetuates the government's intervention into the operations of registered religious organizations, including vetting and appointing clergy, as well as the dissemination of religious messaging and materials.<sup>1</sup> Article 5(5) reflects the Constitution's premise that restriction on freedom of belief can be justified on the grounds of national security, public order, or morality or tarnish the "image of national heroes and notables".<sup>2</sup>
8. The purpose of the Law on Belief and Religion indicates the government's intention to control religious organizations and activities. Article 8 and Chapter III specify registration requirements, which include submission of detailed information about the religion's credo, purpose, yearly planned activities, and size as well as personal

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<sup>1</sup> Law on Belief and Religion, *supra* note 89 at art. 36 and 37; *see also* USCIRF, Annual Report 2018 *supra* note 89, at 3; *Freedom in the World: Vietnam 2018*, *supra* note 18.

<sup>2</sup> *See infra* at 21, (section on the Violation of Religious Rights and Freedoms).

details of representatives.<sup>3</sup> Such requirements constitute improper interference into the activities of a religious organization and may expose its members to surveillance and retaliation by the government.<sup>4</sup>

9. The requirement that religious activities must be registered with the government is counter to international standard on freedom of religion, which is a concern raised by The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt, in his report of his mission to Vietnam in July 2014: *"It should be clear that the right of an individual or group to their freedom of religion or belief can never be 'created' by any administrative procedures. Rather, it is the other way around: registration should serve this human right, which itself must be respected as preceding any registration."* See:  
[www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A\\_HRC\\_28\\_66\\_Add.2\\_E.doc](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A_HRC_28_66_Add.2_E.doc)
10. The stringent and onerous registration requirements do not comply with the guarantees in Article 18 of the ICCPR, which should be independent of and cannot be conditioned on any domestic process of notification, authorization, recognition or registration.
11. Like the law, Decree No. 162/2017/ND-CP continues promoting the "You Ask/We Grant" mechanism, upon which activities strictly related to belief and religion must still be subject to "notification", "recommendation", "registration" and waiting for "government approval" or "written consent" as a "favor". Provisions in the decree regulate the process and procedures for the change of representatives, and time and place of religious gathering activities. Other provisions regulate the process and procedures for the training of personnel for a religious organization. These are the internal activities of religious organizations. If everything has to be approved by state management agencies, it is clear that the government is interfering too deeply in the internal affairs of religious organizations. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt, said after his visit to Vietnam in 2014, "...registration should be an offer by the State but not a compulsory legal requirement."<sup>5</sup>
12. Both the law and its implementing decree convey a biased view of religion. Their languages repeatedly mention vague notions leading to the misconstruction of religious organizations as being antagonistic to the government. These provide a loophole for the authorities to accuse or charge religious organizations with violating the law.

### ***Imprecise language leading to arbitrary interpretation of the law***

13. The language of this law and the implementing decree is so vague that anyone with authority may interpret it in whichever way he likes. The recent incident in the Catholic Parish of Yen Giang, Quang Binh Province, serves as an alarming illustration. This parish, which has approximately one thousand parishioners, is located in an

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at art. 8, Ch. III.

<sup>4</sup> USCIRF, Annual Report 2018 *supra* note 89, at 3.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, available at :  
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f432530.html>

impoverished rural area that has few accessible roads. Since 2014, the Parish Priest, Reverend Cao Duong Dong, had regularly conducted prayer service at the home of the elderly, those with disabilities, and those without means of transportation to go to church. This may no longer be possible. On May 15, 2018, the commune government issued a formal notice declaring prayer service at private homes illegal, citing Article 12 of Section III, and Articles 16, 17, 18, 19 of Section IV of the Law on Belief and Religion.

14. The national security provisions in the Constitution and the Law on Belief and Religion have yet to be clearly defined in order to prevent abuses or unintentional misinterpretation by implementing authorities.

### **Limitations**

15. The Law on Belief and Religion prescribes limitations to freedom of religion or belief on the grounds of national defence, national security, national sovereignty, order, social safety, and the environment; and doing harm to social ethics. This is not in compliance with the condition that any limitations must be for the pursuit of a legitimate aim — the protection of “public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others” as provided by article 18, paragraph 3, of the ICCPR. Limitations must furthermore strictly remain in the realm of necessity and proportionality, which, *inter alia*, means that they should always be confined to a minimum degree of interference. These and other criteria are prescribed with the purpose of safeguarding the substance of freedom of religion or belief also in situations of a potential or factual collision with other rights or important public interests.<sup>6</sup>
16. These limitations reflect the essence of the 2013 Constitution, which guarantees basic human rights but gives the State broad leeway to regulate, limit, restrict or forbid the exercise of those same rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Article 14, paragraph 2, of the 2013 Constitution contains a number of reasons for restricting human rights and citizens’ rights. While the possibility to restrict human rights in the interest of “national defence, national security, social order and safety, social morality and community well-being” differs slightly from the criteria set out in article 18, paragraph 3, of the ICCPR, article 24, paragraph 3, of the 2013 Constitution broadly allows limitation by forbidding anyone “to take advantage of belief and religion to violate the law”.<sup>7</sup>

### **Recognized religious organizations as government instruments**

17. The Vietnamese government has a long history of restricting religious freedom, particularly in cases where it perceives certain religious groups as having ties to the West, or criticizing repressive government practices.<sup>8</sup> Officially, the government

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<sup>6</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, available at :

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f432530.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the treatment of religion in Vietnam, see Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam: State Management of Religion, (2016) available at

<http://queme.org//app/uploads/2016/02/Report-VCHR-FoRB-in-Vietnam-State-management-of-religions-Feb-2016.pdf>

attempts to promote an image of religious tolerance,<sup>9</sup> and, as discussed above in section a, the Constitution nominally guarantees religious freedom for all people.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the reality is that the CPV and the Fatherland Front seriously restrict the ability of people to freely engage in religious observance. The government engages in a massive effort to manage the practice of religion, favoring certain groups, while making it difficult for other groups to practice their faith. Aside from the law, the participants interviewed for this report provided deeply disturbing information about local officials pressuring them to stop practicing their faith. These tactics of harassment, intimidation, and abuse were not necessarily based on any legal foundation, and suggest that local CVP officials perceive the practice of religion as undermining the communist and atheist identity of the state and country.<sup>11</sup>

18. The Vietnamese government has used registration requirements to tighten the noose around unregistered, independent-minded churches while creating more favorable conditions for government-created or controlled churches to expand their influence, thus sidelining unregistered churches and even forcibly converting their members. To a casual observer, the quick expansion of certain government-created or controlled religions may be perceived as greater freedom of religion; a closer look would reveal the sinister reality that forced conversion is proceeding at a quickening pace.
19. This approach has worked so well that the forced conversion of millions of followers of the Cao Dai Religion has gone unnoticed by the international community for the past two decades. In 1978, the Vietnamese government abolished the Cao Dai Church. Then in 1997, by a directive of the Communist Party, the government created a totally new sect, which we will refer to as the 1997 Sect. Obtained copies of internal directives of the CPV show an elaborate plan for it to dictate the religious dogma of the new sect, and political cells of communist agents to control all parts and aspects of its activities. The Vietnamese government transferred the Cao Dai Religion's Holy See and other key facilities to the 1997 Sect. Local governments have aided the 1997 Sect to seize some 300 Cao Dai temples – only about 15 temples remain under the control of Cao Dai followers independent of the 1997 Sect, but are at risk of being taken at any time.
20. Even when religious groups manage to gain approval through registration, officials continue to be intrusive and to oversee their activities.<sup>12</sup> In his testimony before the U.S. Congress, Loan Rmah, a pastor under the Southern Evangelist Church of Vietnam, which is recognized and accorded legal status by the Vietnamese government. Pastor Loan Rmah was the head pastor of the Church of Budak in Thuan An, DakMil, Daknong Province. He is seeking asylum in the United States.

“Even though we have a church, we do not have the freedom to practice our religion. The Vietnamese government controls the Executive Committee that leads the church. Anytime we want to hold elections of the Executive

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Religion and Beliefs*,

[http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/en/mofa/en/tt\\_vietnam/nr050324092159/](http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/en/mofa/en/tt_vietnam/nr050324092159/) (last visited July 3, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *supra* note 12 at art. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Freedom Now, *Using Law as a Tool of Oppression: Vietnam's Crackdown on Civil and Political Rights*, (Draft version, July 6, 2018)(on file with author)

<sup>12</sup> *Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam*, *supra* note 85; *see also* USCIRF, *Annual Report 2018* *supra* note 89, at 3.

Committee, we have to inform the Sub-district, District and Daknong Province Police to request their permission. The Church must provide them the full names of all candidates for background check. To be eligible, a candidate must not have been in service of the South Vietnamese Government, or a member of the FULRO (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races) movement or any group deemed to be opposing the Hanoi Government. On election date, the government authority presides over the election process. The government authority also attends and observes all ordination ceremonies.

“When the church wants to celebrate holidays such as Christmas or Easter, or offer wedding or funeral services, the Pastor must get prior permission from the authority and specify the day, time and duration of the services as well as the number of participants. The Pastor must provide the text of his sermon to the government seven days before the services for prior approval.

“The government even controls the words that we can use in our sermons. It is forbidden to use words such as ‘devil’ because in Vietnamese ‘ma quy’ can be flipped around to spell as ‘My qua’, meaning that Americans coming back. For such an absurd reason, we may not mention ‘devil’ in our sermons. Similarly, we may not say ‘The Christ is coming again’ because the authority interprets that as meaning ‘Americans will return to Vietnam.’ The Vietnamese government accuses Protestantism to be an American religion. Neither may we use the word ‘freedom’ because the government believes that freedom refers to America as in the ‘land of the free’.

“The authorities also send their operatives to come and monitor our religious services. At the start of the services, the program leader must recognize and give thanks to the Communist Party and government officials first. Then we can give thanks the Lord, the guests and the Church, in that order.”<sup>13</sup>

### ***Independent Buddhists***

21. The government, using economic development as pretext, has targeted Buddhist temples that do not submit to government control. Often times, these independent Buddhist temples serve as safe havens for disenfranchised people such as victims of land grabbing, disabled veterans of the Republic of Vietnam, flood victims, etc. Individuals who advocate for freedom of religion are subject to political repression, including defamation by the state-owned media. Familiar examples include Most Venerable Thich Khong Tanh, Most Venerable Thich Thien Hanh, Most Venerable Thich Vien Dinh, and many other leaders of Buddhist communities. The Vietnam News Agency once labeled Most Venerable Thich Khong Tanh as “a stubborn guy who keeps inciting social disorder and acting against the country.” He spent ten years in “re-education” camps for protesting the Government’s policy of conscripting Buddhist monks into the army. As the government controls all media organizations, the independent Buddhist communities have no means to defend their image and reputation.

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<sup>13</sup> See full text of Pastor Loan Rmah’s testimony at:

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20160622/105108/HHRG-114-FA16-Wstate-LoanP-20160622.pdf>

22. The government forces independent Buddhist temples to join the state's Buddhist Church and often resorts to intimidation and harassment to pressure followers of independent temples to join go to government-controlled temples.
23. The demolition of Lien Tri Temple, a century-old pagoda in Thu Thiem, Saigon, illustrates the crackdown against the Buddhist faith. Despite many appeals by the Abbot Thich Khong Tanh, the temple's and international outcry, on September 8, 2016 hundreds of security personnel forcibly removed all the monks and demolish the temple and then demolish. Ho Chi Minh City justified the act by citing an urban development plan approved by the Prime Minister. However, recently discovered documents showed that the plan did not include this site. A very valuable piece of Vietnam history has been destroyed. Before its destruction, Lien Tri Temple was a place for civil society organizations to hold meetings, hosted regular gift-giving sessions for disabled veterans and the disadvantaged, and served as a shelter for victims of land grabbing.
24. Phap Bien Pagoda in Ho Tram Hamlet, Phuoc Thuan Village, Xuyen Moc District, Ba Ria – Vung Tau, was built in 2000 with contributions from local donors. In 2011 a mob led by two local residents ransacked the pagoda, destroyed Buddha's statues, and used hoodlums to terrorize the locals. They used excavation equipment to wreck the pagoda's foundation after seizing all its contents. The congregation filed a complaint with the government at the village, district, province and national levels. They did not receive any reply. As they erected a temporary structure of wood, bamboo and straw for worship and religious training activities, on August 25, 2011, the government of Xuyen Moc and Phuoc Thuan mobilized 150 police officers, government workers, Rapid Response Force No. 113, and Border police, numbering approximately 150 individuals, to surround the pagoda's grounds. They destroyed the temporary structure and beat up the Buddhists at the pagoda. When some of them took photographs as evidence, policemen grabbed the cameras and beat up the residents even more severely. Before the temple was demolished, the Religious Affairs Office of Ba Ria – Vung Tau had repeatedly proposed that the pagoda's Board join the Buddhist Church of Vietnam, a state-established church serving the Communist Party's objective of controlling religious life. Phap Bien Pagoda refused to join.
25. In 2012, Ven. Thich Nguyen Phong converted his house into Minh Tam Buddhist Meditation Center. Before his death, he transferred its ownership to Ven. Thich Vinh Phuoc. After taking possession, he enlarged the center to make room for monks coming there. When the construction was nearing completion, the Province ordered him to suspend it. The government-sanctioned Buddhist Church in Xuyen Moc District did not allow the monks to spend their monastic lives at the center because the temple remained independent. While Xuyen Moc District did not openly ban Ven. Thich Vinh Phuoc from taking ownership of the inherited property, it pressured resident monks to leave.
26. The government has since 2013 taken measures to force the monks and followers at Dat Quang Temple to join the state's Buddhist Church. The late Ven. Thich Thien Dat erected Dat Quang Temple in 1995. Shortly before he passed away on September 23, 2013, he had made a will to cede it to TVP. Nevertheless, the government ordered TVP to hand it over to the state's Buddhist Church. In February 2014 TVP laid the foundation for a temporary wooden structure to house the clergy. The police came,

dismantled it and seized all the lumber; only the foundation was left. On October 6, 2015 approximately 300 individuals -policemen, border control policemen, plainclothes agents and thugs -to dismantle the foundation while traffic police and the militia control access to the temple. Policemen searched for cell phones inside the temple and on the surrounding grounds, arresting anyone who tried to take pictures. As about 10 Buddhists, including followers and monks, were praying and meditating inside the temple, Mr. Nguyen Hoang Thu, chief of Bau Lam Commune Police, ordered his people to break tiles on the roof and spray tear gas down to force out the Buddhists. Policemen lifted Monks Thich Thien Duc and Thich Thien Dat, and an adherent, Le Van Phu, and carried them out. The police took three other adherents to the local police station: Huynh Minh Nhat, Nguyen Thanh Cong, and Nguyen Van Bi. Mr. Doan Van Manh, deputy chief of Bau Lam Commune Police, interrogated Cong and beat him until he vomited and passed out. His relatives later had to take him to Ba Ria Hospital for treatment. The government then brought in equipment to demolish the concrete foundation and remove the broken pieces to dispose of the evidence. After 3 hours, the government forces withdrew after seizing cell phones. In 2016, the state's Buddhist Church sued TVP, claiming that it owned Dat Quang Temple.

27. The government has similarly targeted An Cu Temple in Da Nang City. An Cu Temple is located on the An Cu City block, An Hai Bac Ward, Son Tra District, Da Nang City. On March 13, 2014 Mrs. Huynh Thi Lieu Hoa, Vice Chair of Son Tra District People's Committee, signed a decision to seize and turn the temple site into a residential area, compensating at 1/10 of the market value. Abbot Thich Thien Phuc refused to relocate because he wanted to serve his congregation. The government used its TV station to discredit the abbot and the independent Buddhist Sangha. On August 8, 2014, 2 plainclothes agents attacked the abbot who was going to the funeral of an elderly follower. On August 9 and 10 of 2014, when An Cu Temple clergy celebrated the Filial Piety (Vu Lan) Day, a large mob comprised of women's groups, youth groups, and plainclothes police prevented adherents from entering the temple. July-August, 2015, policemen in Hoa An Ward, Cam Le District, interrogated followers at the commune's police station. They were told not to worship at the temple because its abbot was engaged in politics. During the Vu Lan religious period lasting 9 days, August 9-17, 2016, police isolated the temple through harassing adherents and blocking entry into the temple. On January 13, 2017, the year-end celebration was disrupted. A large number of plainclothes agents wearing masks descended on the temple, beat up adherents, seized their cell phones, and stopped the religious event. Other agents blocked the streets leading to the temple to deny access by other adherents.

### ***Hoa Hao Buddhists***

28. On February 9th, 2018, four members of a family of independent Hoa Hao Buddhists were convicted of disrupting public order for staging a protest . Bui Van Trung and his son Bui Van Tham were each sentenced to 6 years in prison. Trung's daughter Bui Thi Bich Tuyen was sentenced to 3 years, and his wife Le Thi Hen was sentenced to 2 years of house arrest. Family friends and co-religionists Nguyen Hoang Nam and Le Thi Hong Hanh were sentenced to 4 and 3 years respectively. On the evening of April



18, 2017, traffic police and plainclothes police set up a checkpoint near Bui Van Trung's house in An Phu District, An Giang Province, to stop independent Hoa Hao Buddhists from attending the anniversary commemoration of Trung's mother's death. The traffic police confiscated their papers. Plainclothes policemen cursed and threatened to beat them. When Trung's son Bui Van Tham tried to stop the men from taking the congregation's motorbikes, they beat him. In response, Trung and dozens of adherents staged a public protest. 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 Tham are former prisoners of conscience.

### ***An Dan Dai Dao Buddhist Sect***

29. Twenty leaders of An Dan Dai Dao (ADDD) are serving a total of 309 years in prison plus 110 years of probation (plus life imprisonment for founder Phan Van Thu), for "attempting to overthrow the government (a false charge)." The motive was to expropriate a US\$ 1.3 million property while decimating an independent Church.
30. ADDD, founded in 1969 in Phu Yen Province to bring Buddhist Truth, Kindness, and Beauty to the world, had by April 1975 (end of Vietnam War) 14 temples, hundreds of monks and nuns, and tens of thousands of adherents. In the last months of the Vietnam War, ADDD members donated blood, fed displaced victims, rescued the wounded and collected dead bodies.
31. When the war ended, the new regime confiscated all their temples, destroyed its religious materials and Buddha statues, occupied its institutions, and forced monastics to return to secular life by destroying meditation huts, places of worship, and living quarters. A few continued their religious practice in remote areas.
32. Founder Thu, falsely accused of working for the CIA, was imprisoned through solitary confinement in the Public Security Ministry's Phu Khanh Detention Center for 5.5 years, followed by the A30 Prison in Phu Yen Province where a few hundred adherents and monastics served their 2-year forced-labor sentences. One of them died of from torture and several others died after their release.
33. Once released, the monks and nuns continued to teach and proselytize. The government persecuted them in late 1978. On July 27, 1980, four adherents immolated themselves while praying for religious freedom. In May 1983 Mr. Thu was released from prison and began his probation period.
34. In 2003, responding to Phu Yen Province's economic development policy, ADDD accepted 50 hectares of forest land to plant 9000 hardwood trees and create a theme park. There, ADDD undertook the construction, improvement, and cultivation, and started constructing a combined ecotourism/ADDD pilgrimage-worship park.
35. As the project neared completion, on February 5, 2012 the police arrested key persons working there and confiscated the project. A court tried 22 sect members for "conspiracy to overthrow the government" per Article 79 of the Penal Code. The Government forced other adherents to renounce their faith.
36. On January 28, 2013, the Phu Yen Court sentenced Thu to life imprisonment, the other 21 to a combined 309 years in prison and 110 years of probation. In July 2014, three additional members were charged with "stockpiling, using, and illegal trading of

explosives" and sentenced to a total of 10 years (explosives used during the construction of the complex).

37. Two of those arrested on February 5, 2012 are U.S. citizens. They were not charged with any crime, were asked to pay an administrative fine, and then allowed to fly home to America. However, the government seized their properties and those of two other U.S. citizens - combined worth of US \$300,000 (investments in the project).
38. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism posted on its site that in 2014 Phu Yen Province allowed a company to take over the park and invest 280 B VND (US \$12,264,000) in developing it, <http://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/index.php/items/15858>

### ***Hmong Christians***

39. Local and provincial governments have used violence against Hmong Christians who refused to renounce their faith.
40. In late February 2017, Mr. Ho Nu Lu, a Protestant from Ca Dinh Nhe Village, Huoi Leng Commune, Muong Cha District, Dien Bien Province, lost his right arm and suffered several injuries to his shoulder and face after the village government attacked him because of his Christian faith.
41. On March 29, 2017, a H'Mong Protestant family in Muong Khuong District, Lao Cai Province, was physically attacked on account of the family's religion. On subsequent days, groups of strangers stopped family members who went on errands to force them to recant their faith under the threat of physical abuse.
42. In May 2017, the police department of Đak Lak Province detained a H'Mong Protestant, Mr. Ma Seo Sung, from Ninh Hoa Village, Đak Ngo Commune, Tuy Duc District, Dak Nong Province, and the victim died in police custody on May 5, 2017.
43. On April 22, 2017, the governments of Sam Kha Commune and Hang Dong A Commune beat up Hmong Christians, destroyed their agricultural assets, tore down their houses, and expelled from their community.
44. On November 25, 2017, the governments of Chieng Dong Commune and Hua Chan Village in Tuan Giao District, Dien Bien Province, seized the victims' assets (motorbike, stores of grains), demolished the victims' houses, and expelled 3 Protestant families from their community, without any intervention by the government of the district. In April 2018, other Protestant communities in the province bought construction materials and transported them from Chieng Dong Commune to the site of the demolished houses in Hua Chan Village. However, the village government stopped the shipment intended for rebuilding the destroyed houses.
45. From late 2017 to May 2018, the local governments continuously harassed 9 Hmong Christian families in the hamlets of Noc Coc I and II of Dua Mon Commune and Nong Ke Village of Huoi Mot Commune, Song Ma District, Son La Province. Finally the government seized the Noc Coc residents' assets, demolished their houses, and expelled them from their community.
46. From early January 2018 to May 2018, the governments of Tam Hop Commune and Tuong Duong District in Nghe An Province, with their policemen and border guards, persecuted 7 Protestant families in Pha Lom Village to stop their religious practice although they belong to the Vietnam Evangelical Church (Northern Region), a

registered church, and revoked their civil rights, including legal residency, ID papers, and birth certificates.

### ***Montagnard Christians in the Central Highlands***

47. In the past three years there has been a significant increase in reported incidents of forced renunciation of faith concurrent with land confiscation, interrogation -- frequently with torture -- and/or intimidation. See Vietnam's Relentless Repression of Montagnards in the Appendix.
48. In January 2015 Kpa Y Tran of Phu Can Commune, Krong Pa District, Gia Lai Province, an adherent of the Mennonite Church in Gia Lai Province, was ordered to recant his faith at the local police station. In September 2015, Pastor Ksor Nom from the same community was ordered to recant his faith.
49. In August 2015 11 adherents of the Southern Baptist Church in Gia Xia Commune, Sa Thay District, Kontum Province were arrested while on their way to receive religious training, forced to admit to planning to leave Vietnam without permission whereas the preacher was imprisoned for 20 months. In April 2016 Tay Son District seized half of the remaining land after it previously seized 80% of the original land of the Evangelical Church Alliance of Vietnam (Southern Region) in Phu Phong Commune, Tay Son District, Binh Dinh Province.
50. In October 2015 A H'Nin, an evangelist of the Presbyterian Church of Vietnam in Sa Son Commune, Kontum Province, was ordered to report all religious occurrences such as a religious visitor from another district and also to report planned religious activities to the local police in spite of his Church's status as an approved church.
51. In March 2016 those who met with the visiting U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom were harassed, including Church of Christ's Preacher A Trung, Pastor Y Nuen Ayun, and Ms. Y Bech from Kontum Province, whereas Preacher A Viei of Sa Thay District was beaten and ordered to recant his faith.
52. In June and July 2016 Daklak Province, Krong Ana District, Cu Kuin District, and Krong Pac District policemen ordered Ms. H'Bhit Nie, Pastor Ksor Sun, and Deacon Y Jol B'Krong to recant their faith. In August 2016 the Duc Co District Court in Province sentenced Ms. Rmah H'Din to 4 years of imprisonment for "unauthorized clearing of forest land to grow crops" while the truth was her land had been seized and she had been harassed for years because she followed the Church of Christ. In August 2016 an 80-person team of policemen split into 3 groups to raid the houses of Pastor A Dao, Deacon A Hlum and Ms. Y Bech in Sa Thay District, Kontum Province, and seize religious materials and a laptop without any search warrant. In November and December 2016 the Church of Christ's A H'luih, Y Glen, Ms. Y Bech, Y Quynh Bdap, Ksor Sun and A H'lum were again ordered to recant their faith.
53. In 2017 Daklak Province Police interrogated and harassed several times Y Nuen Ayun of Ea Phe Commune, Krong Pac District and several other Evangelical Church of Christ adherents from this district and Sa Thay District simply for practicing their religion. Y Quynh Bdap, Ksor Sun, Y Jol B'Krong and Y Nuen Ayun were ordered by Krong Pac District Police and Daklak Province Police to recant their faith in June and July 2017. In May 2017 Krong Ana District Police ordered YLe Vi Nie to recant his faith. In June 2017 Binh Phuoc Province Police ordered Pastor Dieu Khen to recant his faith.

54. In April 2017 Pastor A Dao of the Church of Christ was sentenced in Gia Lai Province to 5 years of imprisonment after being brutally tortured during the 7-month investigation period prior to the trial. In October 2017 Ea Bhok Commune and Cu Kuin District Police threatened Y Than Bdap and Y Bhuar Bdap with imprisonment unless they left the Gospel Missionary Church.
55. In January, March, and April 2018 the police of Daklak Province, Krong Pac District, and the Town of Buon Ma Thuot ordered Y Quynh BDap, Y Nguyet BKrong, and Y Kuu to leave the Gospel Missionary Church. In April 2018 the police of Ea Drong Commune and the Town of Buon Ho in Daklak Province, tortured Y Min Ksor and Y Pum Bia to force them to leave this Church. In May 2018 Cu Mgar District police ordered Y Khen Nie and Y Cieu BKrong to leave this Church, threatening them with imprisonment.

***Key Recommendations***

1. Remove all provisions in the Law on Belief and Religion that place limitations on freedom of religion or belief that are not in compliance with the ICCPR;
2. Amend Decree No. 162/2017/ND-CP so as to clarify ambiguous terminology and vague language following the standards of the ICCPR;
3. Make registration an offer to facilitate certain religious activities, instead of a requirement imposed on all religious activities;
4. Immediately and unconditionally release all religious prisoners who are imprisoned for their peaceful expression and/or exercising their other civil and political rights;
5. Investigate all reported incidents of forced renunciation of faith and prosecute responsible government officials;
6. Investigate and prosecute all non-state actors, including policemen acting as non-state actors, that have violated the human rights of others;
7. Investigate and prosecute all perpetrators of torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.