

Vietnamese Authorities Harassed Lien Tri 2 Buddhist Temple in August 2018

To: Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations at Geneva
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 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:

10 people associated with the Sangha of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), including 3 monks and 7 Buddhists who were prevented from celebrating an important Buddhist festival.

- Country(ies) in which the incident took place: Vietnam

- Nationality(ies) of the victim(s): Vietnamese

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

Vietnam requires all religious organizations to be registered with the government. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is an independent religious organization long established before 1975. After 1975, many of UBCV's monasteries, temples, educational and charitable facilities were taken over by the government of Vietnam. The government has been persecuting UBCV in an attempt to seize all its remaining temples.

Temples are coerced to join the government-sanctioned Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha (VBS) established in 1981. Otherwise, the government persecutes using measures such as disrupting religious events, preventing adherents from attending events, requiring victims to come to police stations for interrogations, threatening them with imprisonment, etc.

2. IDENTITY OF THE PERSONS CONCERNED

Please see Addendum 1.

3. INFORMATION REGARDING THE ALLEGED VIOLATION

- Date and time (approximate, if exact date is not known): August 30th, 2018

- Place (location and country/countries): Lien Tri 2 Temple, Trung Hoa Hamlet, Trung Lap Ha Commune, Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City. **(Please see Addendum 2)**

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

The abbot Thich Vinh Phuoc (who also manages Dat Quang Temple) and Monk Thich Dong Long planned to hold a ceremony in memory of Thich Dong Long's grandfather on the occasion of Vu Lan, an important Buddhist festival on August 30, 2018. Mr. Huynh Van Nhut, Vice Chairman of the commune, sent an invitation on August 26 requesting the monk to report to the commune government's building on August 27 to discuss the temple's religious activities. At the meeting, the mother of the monk, Ruoi T Tran was told that they were prohibited from celebrating Vu Lan at the temple and gathering of people to hold a ceremony in memory of Thich Dong Long's grandfather.

Sometime between midnight and the early morning of August 30, the police surrounded Lien Tri 2 Temple to prevent Abbot Thich Vinh Phuoc (who came from Dat Quang Temple to lead the Vu Lan ceremony) and Monk Thich Duc Minh from entering the temple; Monk Thich Dong Long was already at the temple. The group of approximately 50 state agents consisted of policemen in uniforms and plainclothes, traffic policemen, militiamen, and employees of the governments of the commune and hamlets. At 9 a.m., a state agent wearing a dust mask (typically used by motorbike riders when in traffic) entered the temple and seized a Samsung phone from Monk Thich Dong Long.

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

- 1) Prior to the event, the monk received a request to report to the commune government building for "a discussion of religious issues" (in **Evidence Addendum**)
- 2) The interrogators focused on the planned religious activities;
- 3) The State agents prevented anyone from entering the temple (**Evidence Addendum**) because the government disapproved the celebration of Vu Lan in the temple

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

1. **Huynh Van Nhut: Vice Chairman of Trung Lap Ha Commune**
2. **To Thi Nhan: Vice Chairman of the Fatherland Front of Trung Lap Ha Commune**
3. **Nguyen Van Cuong: Chairman of Trung Lap Ha Commune.**
4. **Phan Van Hoang: Deputy Chief of Trung Lap Ha Commune Police**
5. **Trinh Hoang Khai: Chief of Trung Lap Ha Commune Police**
6. **Nguyen Trung Dung: Deputy Chief of Trung Lap Ha Commune Police**
7. **Tran Van Dam: Party Secretary of Trung Hoa Hamlet.**
8. **Ha Van Nhung: Chairman of Trung Hoa Hamlet.**
9. **Tran Manh Hung: an officer of Cu Chi District Police**

All the above State agents participated in preventing the monks and other adherents from entering the temple. There were also other State agents who wore dust masks used by motorcyclists (to hide their identity) or who showed their faces but could not be identified by the victims.

- Are the perpetrator(s) known to the victim? Yes.

- Are state agents or non-state-actors believed to be responsible for the alleged violation? State agents

- 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. **Please see the above list.**

- 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 (we know they are State agents)

- If there are witnesses to the incident, indicate their names, age, relationship and contact address. If they wish to remain anonymous, indicate if they are relatives, by-passers, etc.; if there is evidence, please specify. The victim himself can be a witness (with all the evidence 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): Not yet, but it is clear from all other religious persecution incidents that we know of: the government will do nothing to stop its persecution.

- Were any other steps taken? None

- Steps taken by the authorities: N.A.

- 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? Not yet

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

5. IDENTITY OF THE PERSON OR INSTITUTION SUBMITTING THIS FORM

- Family name: Tran - Given name: Thuong - Middle name: Van
 - Contact number or address: Tel: 0901 47 1956 Email: tudosohai@gmail.com Skype ID: thuongtran
 - Status: Coordinator of the Bà Rịa – Vũng Tàu Buddhist Mutual Support Group
 - 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 need
- Date you are submitting this form: September 12, 2018

Signature of the author

Addendum 1. Information about victims (all victims are Vietnamese citizens and adherents of UBCV Sangha. All authorized the preparer of this report, Thuong Van Tran, to represent them)

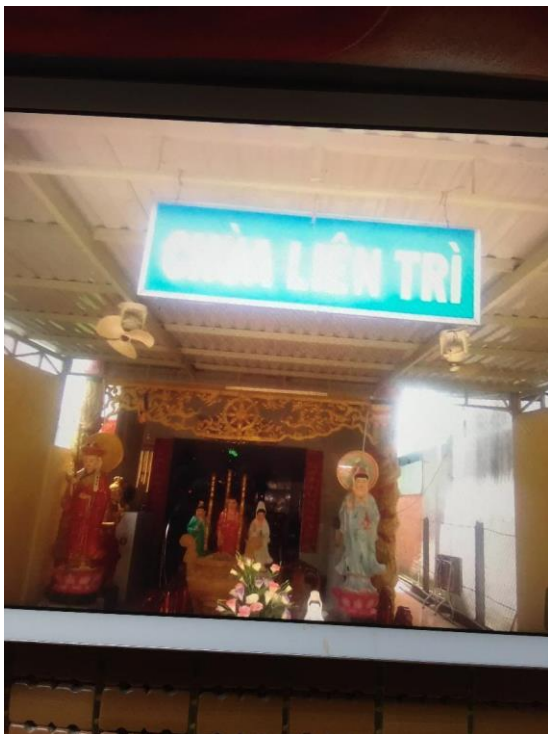
1/ Religious Name: Thich Dong Long. Family Name: Pham Tran. Given Name: Công Trình.
Residence: Lien Tri 2 Temple, Trung Hoa Hamlet, Trung Lap Ha Commune, Cu Chi District, HC Minh City.
Date of birth: 09/16/2000. Gender: Male.

2/ Religious Name: Thich Vinh Phuoc. Family Name: Pham. Given Name: Huu Phuong.
Residence: Thanh Son Hamlet 1A, Phuoc Thuan Commune, Xuyen Moc District, Ba Ria - Vung Tau Province
Date of birth: December 10, 1968. Gender: Male.

3/ Religious Name: Thich Duc Minh.
Residence: Cai Lay, Tien Giang Province
Date of birth: May 2, 1952. Gender: Male.

and 7 Buddhists who had planned to participate in the Vu Lan celebration

Addendum 2. Evidence



Front Entrance of Lien Tri 2 Temple

ỦY BAN NHÂN DÂN
XÃ TRUNG LẬP HẠ
Số: 001/GM-UBND

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc
Trung Lập Hạ, ngày 27 tháng 8 năm 2018

GIẤY MỜI

Kính gửi: Ông (bà) PHẠM TRẦN CÔNG TRÌNH,
ấp Trung Hòa, xã Trung Lập Hạ

UBND xã Trung Lập Hạ kính mời ông (bà) đến để trao
đổi một số vấn đề liên quan đến công tác hoạt động tôn giáo.

Thời gian : Lúc 14 giờ 00, ngày 27 tháng 8 năm 2018
(thứ hai)

Địa điểm: Hội trường UBND xã.

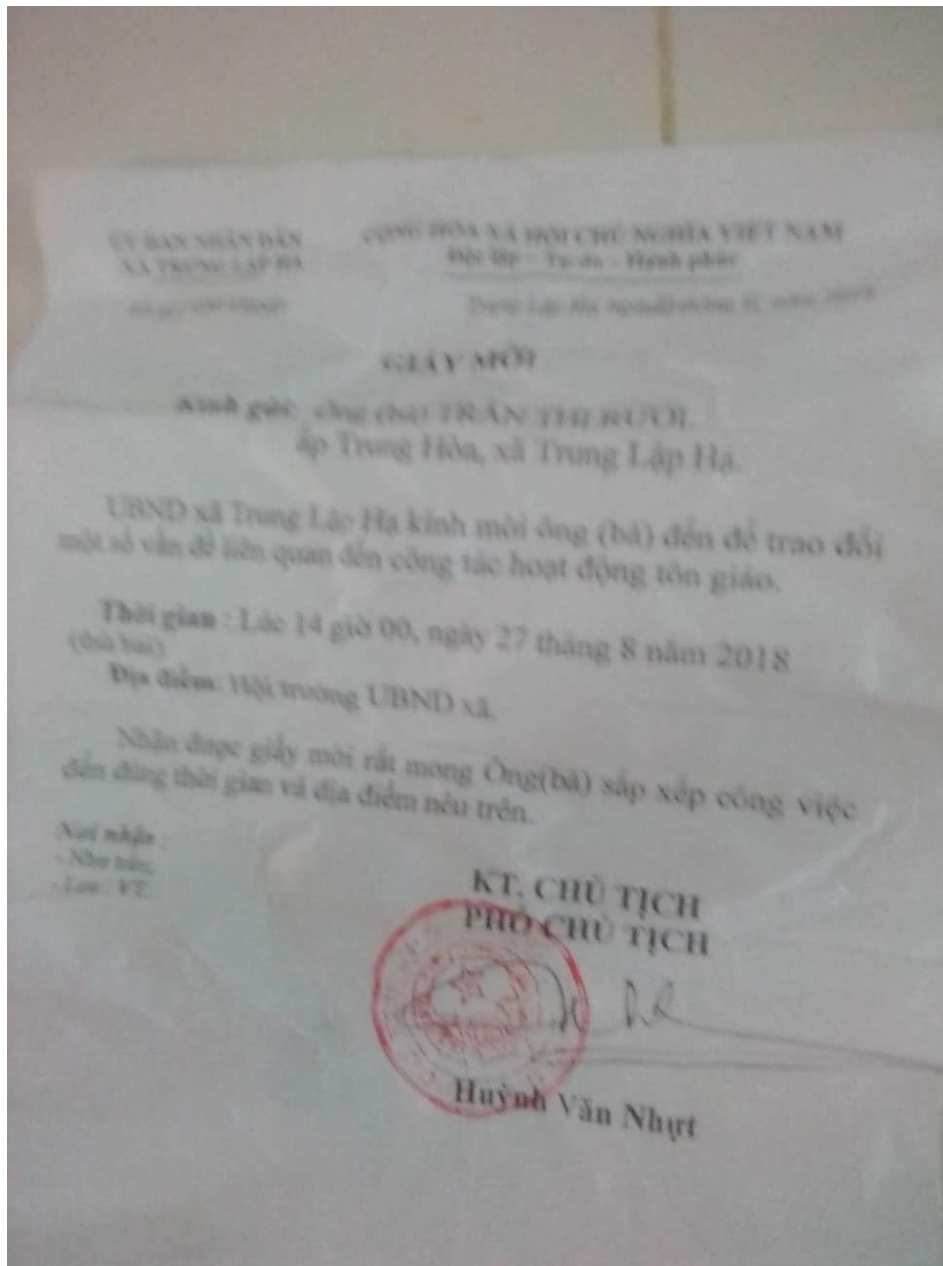
Nhận được giấy mời rất mong Ông(bà) sắp xếp công
việc đến đúng thời gian và địa điểm nêu trên.

Nơi nhận :
- Như trên;
- Lưu : VT.

KT. CHỦ TỊCH
PHÓ CHỦ TỊCH

Huỳnh Văn Nhứt

Invitation from Mr. Huỳnh Van Nhut, commune vice-chairman, requesting Monk Thich Dong Long to come on August 27, 1978 for a “working session” on religious activities.



Invitation from Mr. Huynh Van Nhut, commune vice-chairman, requesting the monk's mother, Ruoil T. Tran to come on August 27, 1978 for a "working session" on religious activities. Ruoil Tran came to the commune office to meet Mr. Huynh Van Nhut, where he informed Ruoil Tran that the temple was prohibited from conducting its religious activities.

Video of the incident:

<https://www.facebook.com/tinh.thanh.3154284/videos/715636908778996/>

Photos showing a number of State agents who surrounded the temple on August 30, 2018



The above picture shows the state agent who prevented Abbot Thich Vinh Phuoc's car from approaching the temple. The woman in the picture is Ruoi T. Tran, the mother of Monk Thich Dong Long. She was pleading with the policeman to allow Abbot Thich Vinh Phuoc to proceed.



These pictures shows state agents in uniforms and plainclothes harassing and preventing the monks from proceeding to the temple.



Many of the people participating in the blockade work for the government in various agencies. A number of them appeared embarrassed (e.g., covering their faces), but they had to do what senior police and government officials had ordered them to do, i.e, assisting in the government's religious persecution.