**BRIEF ON THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT’S**

**PERSECUTION OF THE UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM**

Following Communist North Vietnam’s 1975 invasion of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the Communist government has been systematically decimating the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). UBCV was established in South Vietnam in early 1964 to represent most of that country’s temples and congregations of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. To achieve its objective, the Communist government took the following measures:

1. Unlawful detention, torture, imprisonment and banishment of UBCV leaders:
* Torturing to death Most Ven. Thich Thien Minh in 1978;
* Giving several prison sentences to Most Ven. Thich Khong Tanh over a 20-year period beginning in 1976;
* Sentencing to death Most Ven. Thich Tue Sy, a Buddhist scholar, in 1988; he was later released as a result of international pressure;
* Sending into internal exile 2 Buddhist leaders who eventually succeeded each other as the UBCV Supreme Patriarch, Most Ven. Thich Huyen Quang and Most Ven. Thich Quang Do for 10 years. Thich Quang Do was later imprisoned for 5 years, followed by house arrest. After 20 years of confinement in Ho Chi Minh City and less than a month in Thai Binh Province, he escaped from house arrest and sought refuge in Tu Hieu Temple in Ho Chi Minh City.

The context for the persecution changed in 1980 when the Communist government created a new Buddhist church under the Communist Party’s control: the persecution supported its more insidious objective of coercing UBCV members to join the party-controlled Vietnam Buddhist Church (VBC).

1. Harassing abbots, monks and nuns of various Buddhist congregations to coerce them to join VBC as shown in the following recent examples:
* Ven. Thich Duc Minh, abbot of Thien Lam temple in Tien Giang Province, has been the target of a defamation campaign since 2018;
* Monk Thich Duc Long and the congregation of his LienTri II temple in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City, were harassed again in January 2019;
* The abbot and nun of Giac Minh Temple in Hai Chau District, Danang City, were threatened in January 2019.
1. Using the police and/or their hired thugs to impede religious activities or prevent local Buddhists from entering their local temples, particularly when they need to celebrate important days, with the objective of subjugating them to VBC:
* Dat Quang Temple in Xuyen Moc District, Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province: On October 16, 2015, after repeated government disapprovals of the abbot’s request for permission to build much needed residential space for the temple’s monks, the local government destroyed the foundation for a simple wooden structure intended as makeshift housing for the monks. Other forms of harassment have continued.
* Phuoc Buu Temple, also in Xuyen Moc District, was the target of intense harassment on July 19, 2017 when approximately 120 Buddhists gathered for a memorial to the former abbot. Police officers and their hired thugs entered the temple without being invited to insult, intimidate, and take pictures of the participants as if the solemn religious activity had not started.
1. Forcible expropriation of UBCV temples without fair compensation:
* Lien Tri Temple in An Khanh Ward, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City: Following the local government’s notice of confiscation, it razed the temple in September 2016. Most Ven. Thich Khong Tanh, the temple’s abbot who had previously been imprisoned several times for a total of 20 years, had refused to accept a dismally low compensation offered by the government;
* An Cu Temple in Son Tra District, Da Nang City: Abbot Thich Thien Phuoc turned down the government offer (less than 2% of market value) and counter-offered by requesting the government to give him a comparable piece of land and to construct a similar temple for him, or giving him a permit to construct and adequate budget for him to build another temple. On November 9, 2018 the government responded with demolishing the temple.
* Son Linh Temple in Pleikan Town, Ngoc Hoi District, Kontum Province: Taking advantage of Abbot Thich Dong Quang being away in Hue City for cancer treatment, the local government demolished the temple on January 11, 2019.

While UBCV has been diminished over the years as a result of the government’s policy, its remaining temples continue their struggle to remain independent from the Vietnamese Communist Party.