

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM  
to the United Nations Office,  
the World Trade Organization  
and Other International Organizations at Geneva



MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA  
REPUBLIQUE SOCIALISTE DU VIET NAM  
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies,  
de l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce  
et des autres Organisations Internationales à Genève

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The Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and Other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the Letter UA VNM 8/2016 of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016, has honour to hereby transmit the Replies of Viet Nam to the Urgent Appeal of the Special Procedures (01 attachments).

The Permanent Mission of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and Other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 24 January 2017



**Special Procedures Branch**  
**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**  
**GENEVA**

**REPLIES OF VIET NAM TO THE URGENT APPEAL OF THE  
SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF  
(Reference UA VNM 8/2016)**

**1. With regards to allegations on followers of Duong Van Minh (DVM) in Cao Bang and Tuyen Quang Provinces**

Pursuant to Section 3, Article 5 and Section 1, Article 6 of Decree No. 92/2012/ND-CP dated 08 November 2002 detailing regulations and measures for the implementation of the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religion, DVM belief is not eligible to register to conduct religious activities and has not been recognized as lawful religious organization. In fact, followers of DVM belief did not merely conduct religious activities. For personal gain, they incited some ethnic minority people to give up their production activities and to join this group. This organization take advantage of the trust of ethnic minority people to establish the so-called "Hmong Kingdom", instigates separatist activities and undermines solidarity among Vietnamese ethnic groups.

The so-called "funeral facilities" of this group were illegally built for political purposes. Although the local authorities have repeatedly persuaded and requested them to dismantle these illegal constructions, but some members still refused to comply with such request and even used knives, bricks, stones to intimidate local officials. Therefore, the local authorities had to dismantle these illegal buildings. This process was carried out in accordance with current legislation. The information that local authorities aggressed and assaulted the followers of DVM organization in Bao Lam District, Cao Bang Province during this process is inaccurate. Some extremist members who hindered the process and committed acts of violence against officials on duty were slightly injured, but their health conditions were not affected.

After an in-depth examination, both Polices of Ha Giang Province and Cao Bang Province have not found any recorded arrest from 30 to 31 August 2015 in Ha Giang City (not Ha Giang Town). Therefore, the information that "a follower of DVM from Bao Lam District was reportedly tortured and severely maltreated during the two days of interrogation sessions with Public Security agents in Ha Giang Town regarding his meeting with the delegation of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)" is totally inaccurate.

Similar allegations related to some disruption during a destruction of illegal "funeral facilities" in Ham Yen District, Tuyen Quang Province have been also verified. There were only some extremist members who hindered the

process and committed acts of violence against officials on duty were slightly injured, but their health conditions were not affected. Local police summoned them to the police station for report, but they did not show up. Therefore, the allegation that Government forces brutally beat up and electrified villagers is totally fabricated.

## **2. With regards to allegations on followers of Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV) in Ba Ria – Vung Tau Province**

Dat Quang Temple (located at Hamlet 2B, Bau Lam Commune, Xuyen Moc District, Ba Ria - Vung Tau Province) was established in 1986 by Venerable Le Chuy (Thich Thien Dat). Upon the request of Venerable Thich Thien Dat, on 21 August 2008, the authorities agreed to recognize Dat Quang Temple as a religious establishment. On 07 July 2012, the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha (VBS) Executive Board of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province recognized Dat Quang Temple as legitimate religious organization affiliated to VBS of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province.

After the decease of Venerable Thich Thien Dat, monk

) took over the management and undertook religious activities in Dat Quang Temple without the approval of the VBS, which constitutes a violation of the VBS's Charter and its internal rules. The VBS's Executive Board of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province has brought this case to the People's Court of Xuyen Moc District to claim its legitimate rights to manage Dat Quang Temple.

In recent years, monk had built some buildings within Dat Quang Temple's compound without obtaining the construction permit issued by competent authorities, thus violated the construction order as well as and current administrative regulations of Viet Nam. The local authorities have repeatedly made records of administrative violations, issued orders to stop construction works and administrative sanctions. On 10 September 2015, the People's Committee of Xuyen Moc District issued a decision to dismantle these illegal constructions invested by monk at Dat Quang Temple. On 06 October 2015, the local authorities executed the decision;

was notified but not present on the site at the time of dismantling. The destruction was carried out in accordance with current regulations.

## **3. With regard to information on followers of Cao Dai in Tay Ninh Province**

In recent years, some individuals who had been expelled by the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See for violating canonical law have conducted activities against Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See and then, undertook

religious activities as an independent group. This group, along with the Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See and the management boards of local branches, often struggle with one another to practice religious ceremonies at Cao Dai followers' residences. This is an internal affair of the Cao Dai Holy See. Local authorities did not intervene in such activities as stated in the Communication. Police forces only dispersed the crowd when there were scuffles to ensure security and public order. Specific information is as follows:

(i) On 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015, [redacted] (former Cao Dai dignitary, his dignity was withdrawn in 2014 by Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See for violating canonical law) and 50 Cao Dai followers celebrated the Rite of Installing Devine Eye Portrait at [redacted] residence (An Hoa commune, Trang Bang District, Tay Ninh Province). Mr. Nguyen Van Tui (leader of the management board of An Hoa Branch) and some Cao Dai followers persuaded [redacted] to let the management board perform the ceremony in accordance with Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See's regulations. However, the group of [redacted] thrown chairs at Mr. Tui and those who accompanied him, which then led to clashes. After receiving information, the police arrived to disperse the crowd to ensure security and public order. [redacted] and more than 40 people reported the incident to the police and denounce Mr. Tui for attacking, destroying and confiscating properties and religious items of [redacted]. Through an in-depth investigation, the police concluded that Mr. Tui had not been proven guilty, and then informed the parties concerned of such conclusion.

(ii) On 11 November 2015, [redacted] along with 70 people conducted the ceremony of Installing Devine Eye Banner at [redacted] residence (Cam Binh Hamlet, Cam Giang Commune, Go Dau District). During the preparations for the ceremony, the management board of the branch of Cam Giang came and persuaded [redacted] to let the management board organize the ceremony in accordance with Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See's regulations. Clashes occurred between two groups. After receiving information, the police forces arrived and dispersed the crowd; invited them to the police station and requested them not to disrupt security and public order while conducting religious activities.

(iii) On 13 November 2015, [redacted] and about 50 Cao Dai followers organized the Great Acknowledgment Ceremony at [redacted] residence (Cuu Truong Hamlet, Truong Hoa commune, Hoa Thanh District). The management board of Truong Hoa Branch came and persuaded Ms. Loan to let the management board organize the ceremony in accordance with Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See's regulations. Clashes between the

two groups forced the police to disperse the crowd to ensure security and public order. During the incident, \_\_\_\_\_ - a member of the management board of Truong Hoa Branch - had his left hand broken. The police invited those who have been involved in this incident to the police station for a further clarification. However, they did not have sufficient evidence to identify the suspect who had caused the injury to Mr. Tran.

#### **4. With regards to allegations concerning Private home Evangelical worshippers in Dak Lak Province**

Dak Lak police has neither arrested nor maltreated any pastors or worshippers of Evangelical organizations, nor prevented them from practicing their belief. Through the review, the Police of Xuyen Moc District did not receive any complaint about a group of evangelical worshippers in Bau Lam Commune, Xuyen Moc District for being harassed or prevented from practicing their religion in November 2014. There is therefore no basis for the police to further investigate the matter.

#### **5. Regarding allegations related to followers of Evangelical Church of Christ of Viet Nam (ECCV) in Dak Lak Province**

The allegations are vague. No specific information was provided, making verification by the authorities difficult. The Police of Dak Lak Province did not arrested or maltreated any pastor or followers of ECCV, including those in Dak Lak. Police forces did not prevent them from practicing their religious activities. After conducting in-depth examination, the Police forces have found a certain number of activities which coincided with the date and location described in the Appeal, but the facts are of different nature. Details are the followings:

In 2014, police forces were made aware of contacts and document exchanges between some Dak Lak inhabitants and certain foreign organizations which conduct operations to overthrow the State of Viet Nam. The Police then summoned those individuals to police station in order to clarify information on their acts and inform them the nature of the foreign organizations they were in contact with. On August 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 and September 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, the police met

\_\_\_\_\_ (residing at Ea Phe Village, Krong Pac District). On September 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, \_\_\_\_\_ (brother) was summoned by the police. On June 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, the Police also invited \_\_\_\_\_ (residing at Tara Hamlet, Krong Pac District) to the police station. The Police also tried to persuade those individuals to avoid being involved in unlawful activities outside the framework of Evangelical Church of Christ.



On 15 June 2016, police officers and border guards did not detain or interrogate any person in Gia Xieng Hamlet of Ro Koi Commune, Sa Thay District. During this period of time, across the province, no one was arrested or searched for attending the ASEAN Conference on Religious Freedom and the ASEAN Civil Society Conference and ASEAN People Forum, unlike what was stated in the Appeal.

On 18 August 2016, [redacted] (residing in Gia Xieng Hamlet, Ro Koi Commune) was caught by the Police of Gia Lai Province in the act of organizing illegal border crossings into Cambodia for 5 persons (in flagrante delicto case). On 20 August 2016, the Security and Investigation Agency searched [redacted]'s residence, confiscated documents and objects related to his unlawful acts. The whole process of arrest and temporary detention for investigation purpose were conducted in accordance with laws and procedures in force. The search was held in public, it was duly witnessed by representatives of local authority, people in the neighborhood and relatives of the alleged offender.

#### **7. Regarding allegations related to followers of Southern Evangelical Church of Viet Nam in Gia Lai Province**

The Police of Gia Lai Province has not imposed any restriction of movement or restriction of religious activities on followers and religious organizations in the province. From 2 October 2016 to 21 October 2016, the Police of Chu Puh District met [redacted], his wife and his son for several times to establish the accuracy of information about individuals who have been involved in illegal activities and operations against the State of Viet Nam and who used to be in contact with [redacted]. These are usual, lawful operations of an investigation process. During this process, the police made a record of confiscation of [redacted]'s mobile phone, but the police did not confiscate Bibles, did not beat [redacted] and his relatives. To say the least, the allegations mentioned in the Appeal are fabricated since [redacted] is even not a member of Southern Evangelical Church of Viet Nam.

#### **8. With regards to allegations related to followers of Mennonite Church in Gia Lai Province:**

In Tang Village, Phu Can Commune, Krong Pa District, there is neither Mennonite Church, nor followers. Though the Communication does not reveal the identity of that "Mennonite member", after verifications, there was the case of [redacted] in Phu Can commune who had illegally crossed the border into Thailand in April 2015 together with 3 other family members. The main reason for which he left the country is that he had owed money to the bank and

to many individuals in Krong Pa District and that he had not been able to repay his debts. The only thing that local authorities did is visit and comfort the relatives of [redacted]. In any case, local authorities and police did not pressure on his family members.

**9. Regarding allegations related followers of Presbyterian Church of Viet Nam in Kon Tum Province:**

In the village of Bargoc, Sa Son commune, Sa Thay district, there is actually a group of followers of Presbyterian Church led by [redacted]. This group is composed of 33 members and has registered [redacted] s residence as prayer house. The religious activities conducted by this group are in line with the laws in force and canonical law. This group was not harassed; its activities were absolutely not hampered in 2015. And, the President of the People's Committee of Sa Son Commune did not receive any money from [redacted] as mentioned in the Appeal.

**10. Regarding allegations related to the dismantlement of chapels of Dak Jak (Dac Giac) Parish of Diocese of Kon Tum**

This to affirm that the authorities of Dak Glei District did not hinder religious activities of parishioners and priests of Dac Giac Parish. In April 2015, the priest in charge of the Parish ordered parishioners to build extensions by adding temporary shacks in order to conduct more religious activities. These temporary shacks did not guarantee safety conditions during rainy season and storms and could endanger lives of parishioners.

Therefore, the local authorities has recommended the Bishop of Diocese of Kon Tum to mobilize parishioners of Dak Glei district to dismantle themselves these temporary shacks to avoid unfortunate accidents. However, the priest in charge of Parish has deliberately disseminated misleading information to parishioners, causing misunderstanding of the request of local authorities. Local authorities then have clearly explained to people about this issue.

Regarding the temporary chapels of Dac Giac Parish in Dak To District: the information that Dak To district's authorities gave orders to dismantle 22 chapels in the district as referred to in the Communication is totally inaccurate. Through verifications, there has been no churches or chapels destroyed in recent years.

**11. With regards to allegations related to so-called "Catholic Prisoners" in Nghe An Province:**

In Viet Nam, there is no so-called "Catholic prisoners", there are only those who violated the law were arrested and tried in court. The arrest and trial



of these individuals are fully in accordance with relevant laws and procedures. The rights of prison inmates are guaranteed by law, irrespective of ethnicity and religion.

Through an in-depth verification, police forces found records related to two inmates who were serving imprisonment sentence in Detention Center N.5 (Nghe An Province) did not receive meals provided by the prison officials during January 2015, but what happened in reality is totally different from the information contained in the Appeal. Details are as follows:

(born in 1988, completed execution of imprisonment sentence from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015): from January 6-11, 2015, this inmate refused meals distributed by the Detention Center in order to put forward requests which do not conform with the provisions of the law on the rights of inmates. After explanation by officials of the Detention Center, from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015, [redacted] continued to receive his meals as usual.

(born in 1980, having had the imprisonment sentence reduced and completed sentence serving on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015): from 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015, this inmate refused meals provided by the prison for personal reasons (maintaining body condition, body purification). After that period, the inmate requested to have his meals as usual.

In addition, during their imprisonment in the Detention Center N.5, no request from their family members to send them copies of the Bible was submitted.

## **12. Regarding allegations related to a pastor of local churches in Dak Nong Province**

According to verified information, on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016, the Police of Dak Lak Province invited [redacted] (in charge of Ba Bon churches) to the office of the People's Committee of Thuan An Commune, Dak Mil District to verify information on the preparations that he was conducting to organize a charity activity at Ba Bon churches but he had not registered with the local authorities.

At the meeting, [redacted] declared that he had intention to do charity works on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016 with the Group "Sing for the Moment" for the benefit of the pupils who are followers of Ba Bon Churches and that he actually had not registered that activity with the competent authorities.

With explanations and guidance from police officers, he has proceeded to registration procedures for charity works in accordance with current regulations. At the same meeting, [redacted] also acknowledged that his father - [redacted] had illegally fled to the United States and had made falsified statements

about the situation of religious activities in Viet Nam, including those of followers of Viet Nam Evangelical Church in the province of Dak Nong.

The act of inviting [redacted] to a public office, which is a normal operation of the police, was conducted fully in accordance with relevant laws. The Police did not pressure [redacted] to do anything. The Minutes of the meeting corroborated this confirmation.

### **13. With regards to Evangelical members in Dien Bien Province**

The allegations referred to in the Appeal is vague, making the verification of its accuracy very difficult.

After necessary checks, in the village of Du O A, Noong U Commune, Dien Bien Dong District, Dien Bien Province, there is the case of [redacted] born in 1988, member of Southern Evangelical Church of Viet Nam. [redacted] family has repeatedly objected violations by [redacted] of the family convention by abandoning family's traditional ways for Evangelical activities. The family members including his father, who were outraged that [redacted] did not abjure his religion, had some scuffles with him. For this reason, in April 2015, [redacted] decided to move with his ménage to the village of Xa Que from then until now.

In fact, the local authorities have advised the relatives of [redacted] to let him be free to choose religious activities. The local authorities has not harassed or expelled him from the village of Du O A as stated in the communication.

The fact that the relatives of [redacted] did not agree with his choice of religion is an issue within his own family and did not concern the local authorities.

### **14. Regarding allegations related to confiscation of land belonging to Phu Phong Church in Binh Dinh Province**

As repeatedly stressed by Viet Nam to the Special Procedures and other human rights bodies, the general policy of Viet Nam is to allocate land to religious communities for long-term use. Different from other types of land uses, land used by the religious communities is not subject to any taxation or fees. Over the years, hundreds of hectares of land have been granted to religious organizations for the construction of worship places.

Land issues in Viet Nam are complicated questions due to the impact of war and turbulent history. In 1975, after the war ended, the Government decided to requisition some of the land owned by organizations and individuals to serve the subsistence needs of the population.

In 2003, the National Assembly enacted Resolution No. 23/2003/QH11 which stipulates that "The State shall not reconsider the policies and the implementation of the policies on house and land management and the policies on socialist transformation related to houses and land, which had been promulgated before July 1, 1991. The State shall not recognize the reclaim of houses and/or land, which have been managed and arranged by the State for uses in the process of implementation of policies on house and land management and the policies on socialist transformation related to houses and land".

However, the said Resolution also provides that if the owner of the land managed and arranged by the State for uses is really in need of housing, the Government will facilitate his or her settlement.

In the general context described above, in the same year of 1975, the local authorities decided to confiscate a portion of land of Phu Phong Church to serve the needs of the people.

Since then, the land has always been used effectively for community purposes. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the local authorities issued the decision to build Vo Van Dong Park on this land. The construction of the park is clearly for public interest and actually received large support of people in the area.

Phu Phong Church, the representatives of the Evangelical Church Alliance of Binh Dinh Province and the Evangelical Church Alliance of Viet Nam have submitted petitions to the authorities of all levels requesting to stop the construction of proposed park and to reallocate that portion of land to Phu Phong Church.

After conducting surveys, site inspections and reviews of all documents related to this land, the local authorities replied in writing on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 and held a dialogue with Phu Phong Church on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016. During this meeting, the local authorities have clearly explained that land requisition undertaken after the resistance war to meet subsistence needs of the people was necessary. This land has always been used effectively for public purposes. Therefore, the request of Phu Phong Church was not approved.

Although local authorities had explained their decision, on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016, some extremist followers of the Phu Phong Evangelical Church used banners and powerful speakers for disseminating false information, inciting people, making noises and thus, disrupting public order in the area. Due to derangement caused by this group of followers of Phu Phong Church, a number of people living in the area had provocative interactions with the group. Police forces had to intervene by ways of warnings, and then had to disperse the crowd.

in order to ensure security and order in the area. There was absolutely no acts of beating or torture as claimed in the Appeal.

**15. Regarding allegations related to followers of Hoa Hao in An Giang Province:**

First of all, it needs to reconfirm that the so-called groups of Quang Minh Pagoda and Bui Van Trung's Prayer Hall are not legally recognized as religious organizations. Quang Minh Pagoda and Bui Van Trung's Prayer Hall are private properties of [redacted] (residing in Cho Moi District, An Giang Province) and [redacted] (residing in An Phu District, An Giang Province). These two places have not been registered as places of worship of these groups. The two men arranged themselves statues and paintings in their own residences, making them similar to worship places where [redacted] and [redacted] regularly organized illegal activities and often cause disorder in the surrounding area.

On April 2, 2016 and June 22, 2016, dozens of people from different localities gathered at the residence of [redacted] to conduct their so-called religious activities. After receiving complaints from citizens of the area, police forces arrived to give warnings and request [redacted] and these people not to make noise or disorder nor to disturb the population living in the area.

However, some extremist individuals did not abide by the police request and committed acts of insult and attack against police forces (by using weapons and even a car to crash into police officers). The police forces made writing reports and also recorded and videotaped this incident for further handling.

On 28-29 April 2016, [redacted] and some people from other localities organized their so-called religious activities in his private residence ("Bui Van Trung's Prayer Hall") causing serious disorder in the area. After receiving complaints from surrounding residents, the police forces had to make some warnings and proceeded to regular administrative checks with some participants who do not reside in this locality in compliance with relevant laws. [redacted]'s family members always showed uncooperative attitude toward the police officers during this process. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Traffic Police of An Phu District has also tracked and thus issued administrative sanctions to 06 cases of violations of traffic law. Furthermore, these people declared residents at Bui Van Trung's house without registering temporary residence status with competent authorities.

The above-mentioned information reaffirms that the police forces of An Giang Province did absolutely not attack or obstruct people's religious activities as alleged in the Communication.

**16. Allegations relating to attack(s) against Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen and his wife**

Since 19th September 2016, Ho Chi Minh City Police has not received any claim relating to attack(s) committed by unknown men against Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen and his wife on 19 September 2016 near their home. The city police has also checked their files and found no recorded case of attack on 19th September 2016.

**17. Information on measures to ensure the freedom of belief and religion of Viet Nam since the visit of the Special Rapporteur in 2014**

a) The consistent policy of Viet Nam is to respect, protect and ensure the right to freedom of beliefs and religion of the people. All acts of infringement of the right to freedom of beliefs and religions of others are strictly prohibited.

Article 24 of the 2013 Constitution stipulates that: "Everyone shall enjoy freedom of belief and of religion; he or she can follow any religion or follow none. All religions are equal before the law. The State respects and protects the freedom of belief and of religion. No one has the right to infringe on the freedom of belief and religion or to take advantage of belief and religion to violate the laws."

Viet Nam always protects and creates favorable conditions for people to exercise their right to freedom of belief and religion in accordance with national legislation of Viet Nam and in full compliance with international standards on human rights.

This explains the fact that there are currently 38 religious organizations and one dharma-door practice that are recognized by the State, with more than 24.3 million followers (accounting for 27% of national population), an increase of nearly 6.86 million (39,4% higher than 2003). There are around 25.000 places of worship and 83.000 religious dignitaries, 250.000 administrative assistants of religious organizations, 46 training institutions for religious dignitaries. About 8,500 traditional belief and religious festivals are held per year.

b) Since the visit of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of belief and religion in July 2014, Viet Nam has further improved the system of policies and national legislation in order better to ensure the right to freedom of belief and religion:

On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the National Assembly of Viet Nam adopted the Law on belief and religion (which shall come into force on 01.01.2018 and replace the Ordinance on Belief and religion of 2004). Paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the Law on belief and religion stipulates that "the State respects and protects the right to freedom of belief and religion of the people. No one can violate that right."

The Law has added a number of new provisions aimed at ensuring better freedom of belief and religion, such as:

(i) Expand the scope of the subjects entitled to the right to freedom of belief and religion to comply with the provisions in the Constitution in 2013.

(ii) A new chapter on freedom of belief and religion;

(iii) Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Article 5 prohibit specific acts that infringe the freedom of belief and religion, including discrimination based on belief and religion ground, coercion of others to follow or abandon belief or religion, or hinder organizations and individuals to participate in or conduct religious activities.

In addition, in November 2015, Viet Nam's National Assembly adopted amendments of the Penal Code (not yet in force). Article 164 of the 2015 Penal Code clearly defines acts of "infringement upon the freedom of belief and religion of others." and provides for sanctions for this offence. The amended Penal Code also has many provisions prohibiting acts of harassment, persecution against citizens for exercising their right to freedom of belief and religion, namely: Article 157 (illegal arrest, custody or detention of people), Article 158 (infringement upon citizens' places of residence) and Article 167 (infringement upon freedom of speech, freedom of press, access to information, demonstrations).

*On the registration of religious activity:* the provisions on registration of religious activity are aimed at defining the responsibility of relevant authorities at all levels to facilitate religious activities to take place safely, smoothly and in accordance with the provisions of the law, not to limit religious activities;

*On the recognition of religious organizations:* the religious organizations are legal entities engaged in social activities. The main purpose of recognition of religious organizations is to create a legal basis for the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of individuals and organizations engaged in religious activities. Religious organizations and religious groups which have not been yet fully recognized as religious organizations with legal personality can still conduct religious activities at a place duly registered with competent authorities.

c) Over the years, Viet Nam has continued to implement several measures to further promote the religious activities in the country, namely:

(i) Authorities at all levels have strengthened and created necessary conditions for believers and religious organizations to conduct religious activities, renovate and expand of worship places, open training courses on religion for nearly 20,000 people, appoint and assigns more than 3,000 religious dignitaries and publish thousands of publications on belief and religion in Vietnamese, English, French, Chinese, Khmer, Ede, Gia Rai, Ba Na ... languages to serve the needs of citizens for religious activities.

(ii) The Government has also actively supported and coordinated with religious organizations to organize many major religious events, such as: United Nations' Vesak in 2014 with the participation of the followers, the Buddhist sects, scholars from 90 countries all over the world; 2014 Annual Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Viet Nam, Conference of inter superiors of religious orders, the Congress of Pilgrimage La Vang...

d) In the past decades, Viet Nam has also focused on promoting international cooperation in the field of religion and belief:

Viet Nam has actively promoted dialogue and cooperative relations between Viet Nam and the Vatican, effectively conducted periodic negotiations under the framework of the Joint Working Group Viet Nam - Vatican (most recently, the 6<sup>th</sup> round was held in October 2016); received the non-resident Special envoy of the Vatican in visit to Viet Nam and fully cooperated with him.

Relations between Viet Nam and foreign countries and international organizations in the field of religion are also maintained and further developed. At the dialogues with the relevant parties, Viet Nam has actively exchanged and shared experiences in ensuring and promoting human rights, including the right to freedom of belief and religion.

Viet Nam has invited, welcomed many international delegations to visit Viet Nam to learn more about religious policy in the country with the view to strengthening cooperation in the promotion and protection of freedom of belief and religion. At the same time, Viet Nam has also actively cooperated with other countries and international organizations to co-organized international seminars on belief and religion.

