

The Most Venerable Thich Thien Minh, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

In 1979 he was evicted from his pagoda and sentenced to life imprisonment as he refused to renounce his Church. In 1986 he protested the mistreatment of political prisoners by the prison management; for that he received a second life sentence. Thanks to mounting pressure by Western governments, he was released in 2005 after 26 years of imprisonment. The government did not return his pagoda to him.

In 2006 he co-founded the Friendship Association of Political and Religious Prisoners of Vietnam to promote mutual support and assistance among victims of persecution.

Wherever he went, he faced harassment by the local authorities. Whoever offered him temporary residence would receive threats from the police. After years of moving from place to place, in 2010 he moved in with his younger sister in Hoc Mon District, HCM City. He has since turned her private home into a makeshift place of worship. He continues to be harassed by the local police and at times must seek temporary refuge at a local pagoda.





Thien An Monastery, Thua Thien – Hue Province

Established in 1940 by priests of the Benedict Order, the Thien An Monastery has been targeted by the Communist government for land expropriation. Currently there are 10 priests and 77 monks residing at this monastery.

In 1998, Thua Thien Hue government confiscated 49 hectares of land of the monastery. In 2015, the Government decided to take the monastery's remaining 58 hectares of land. With the support of the police, an organized mob destroyed the Crucifix that stood on a hill named Calvary Hill. Each time the Monastery's priests rebuilt it, the organized mob desecrated it.



On June 28, 2017, the government of Thua Thien – Hue Province deployed about 200 uniformed police and plainclothes public security agents who disguised as thugs to enter the Thien An Monastery. Armed with knives, metal batons, police's gears, sticks... they brutally attacked the priests and monks, and desecrated the Crucifix. Four monks were severely injured.

On August 10 and 11, the organized mob again attacked the monastery and threatened its resident priests with violence, all in the presence of the local police.



Mr. Tran Ngoc Suong, member of the Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Cao Dai Religion

Mr. Tran Ngoc Suong was admitted into the Cao Dai Religion in 1974, and was elected by fellow Cao Dai followers to be Chair of the local Parish Executive Committee in Go Cong City.

He attended the Southeast Asia Freedom of Religion or Belief (SEAFORB) Conference in 2015 and again in 2016 to bring the plight of his religion to the world's attention. The police has since placed him under travel ban. Last April, two UN Special Rapporteurs raised their concern about Mr. Suong's travel ban in a communication to the Vietnamese Government, which has remained unanswered.

Also in April, the Cao Dai Sect that was created by a directive of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1997 ordered Mr. Suong's eviction from his own religion. Apparently with government support, several social media outlets have published defamatory messages against him.

Last month, Mr. Suong sued the 1997 Cao Dai Sect for defamation despite the high risk that his lawsuit would be summarily dismissed by people's court.

Nguyen Bac Truyen, Hoa Hao Buddhist

Nguyen Bac Truyen is a legal expert who leads the Vietnamese Political & Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, which assists prisoners of conscience and their families. On November 17, 2006, Truyen was arrested and sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison on charges of “conducting propaganda” against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. He was released on May 2010.

On July 30, 2017, he was again detained, arrested, and ultimately sentenced to 11 years’ imprisonment on charges of “carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people’s administration.” Before his arrest, he was convenor of the Vietnam Freedom of Religion or Belief Roundtable.

The Vietnamese government has targeted Truyen due to his human rights and religious freedom advocacy, particularly on behalf of Hoa Hao Buddhists. He is a 2011 recipient of Human Rights Watch’s Hellman/Hammett Award.





Pastor A Dao, Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ (MECC)

He is an advocate for religious freedom who was arrested shortly after attending the conference on Freedom of Religion in Southeast Asia and the ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People's Forum in East Timor. At these events, he presented the plight of the MECC and asked the international community for help.

Pastor A Dao took over as the lead pastor of this church after his predecessor, Pastor A Ga, fled to Thailand in 2013 (in July 2019, A Ga met with U.S. President Donald J. Trump during the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom). A Dao has also advocated for religious freedom for his church members in Vietnam's Central Highlands and elsewhere.

He was arrested on August 18, 2016, shortly after his return to Vietnam. On April 28, 2017, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison for “helping individuals to escape abroad illegally.” During interrogation, he was reportedly tortured in order to extract a confession. A Dao denied the charge and claimed his innocence.

His health has deteriorated as a result of the harsh treatment typically reserved for prisoners of conscience. There have been reports that in late 2019, A Dao was tortured in prison.

Hoang Van Ngai, Deacon at the Bui Tre Hmong Protestant Church in Gia Nghia Commune, Cu Jut District, Dak Nong Province

As a successful businessman, he financed charity work to help fellow Hmong facing financial hardship. He used his own money to build a church for his Hmong Christian congregation. He always at the frontline to help fellow church goers to deal with the Communist police.

On March 14, 2013, the police came to his house to arrest him and his brother Hoang Van Pa. They managed to escape. However, the police detained their wives as hostage. Ngai and Pa reported themselves to the police in exchange for their wives' freedom.

On March 17, Pa overheard his brother being tortured in an adjacent room. Later that day, Ngai's family was notified by the police that Ngai had died in police custody. Threatened by the police for speaking out about his death, Ngai's entire extended family fled to Thailand to seek protection from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

