

January 31, 2024

The Honorable Omar Zniber, President of the United Nations Human Rights Council

The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States of America

The Honorable Rashad Hussain, U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom

Ambassador Robert Rehak, Chair of the International Religious Freedom and Belief Alliance (IRFBA)

Commissioners of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

The Honorable Congressman Christopher Smith, Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

The Honorable James McGovern, Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

**Re: Millions of Cao Dai followers wish to celebrate their religion's Centennial at their Cao Dai temples**

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, write to respectfully seek your support for the millions of Cao Dai followers who need to regain access to their places of worship in Vietnam in time to celebrate, in late 2025, the centennial anniversary of the founding of their Cao Dai Religion.

Practically all Cao Dai temples, including the central temple located in Tay Ninh Province (popularly known as the "Tay Ninh Holy See"), are being occupied by a religious sect created by the Vietnamese Government in 1997 and recently found to be a "racketeering enterprise" by a U.S. court.

The Vietnamese Government abolished the Sacerdotal Council of the Cao Dai Religion in the early 1980s and in 1997 replaced it with a government-

created religious sect. The government transferred possession of the Tay Ninh Holy See to this “1997 Sect” and supported sect members to systematically seize some 300 local Cao Dai temples, often using force and/or with the support of the public security police.

Sect members at all levels have committed innumerable atrocities against Cao Dai followers, including beating, abduction, attempted murder, trespassing, interfering with religious services, expropriating property, demolishing graves, blocking funerals, etc. These atrocities have been documented in many U.S. government reports. For instance:

*“Of the more than 300 Cao Dai temples in Vietnam, all but approximately 15 have been seized by the government-sponsored 1997 Sect during the previous two decades... Between April 20 and June 30, the 1997 Sect demolished at least 15 graves at Cuc Lac Thai Binh Cemetery belonging to independent Cao Dai followers whose families refused to join the 1997 Sect.”* ([US Commission on International Religious Freedom’s report for the year 2018](#))

*“On September 11 and 13, for example, members of the recognized Cao Dai Sect (Cao Dai 1997) disrupted the rite of unregistered Cao Dai members (Cao Dai 1926) at a private residence in Ben Cau District, Tay Ninh Province.”* ([US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom Report](#))

On August 16, 2023, the District Court for Dallas County, Texas, ruled that the 1997 Sect and its leader, Mr. Nguyễn Thành Tám, engaged in racketeering activities in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1962(c), the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, which targets criminal enterprises, and must pay for damages caused to two Cao Dai followers and a Cao Dai Temple in Dallas, Texas.

The aspiration of all Cao Dai followers in Vietnam and among the diaspora is to celebrate, in late 2025, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of their religion at their Tay Ninh Holy See and their hundreds of local temples

throughout Vietnam. Your support for this legitimate endeavor is urgently requested.

Respectfully Yours,

### **Organizations:**

1. Boat People SOS
2. Church of Scientology National Affairs Office, Washington DC
3. Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ)
4. Stefanus Alliance International
5. Vietnamese Women for Human Rights
6. Vietnam Coalition Against Torture (VN-CAT)
7. Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam (AFJV)
8. Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam
9. Cao Dai Today
10. CSW

### **Individuals:**

1. Huong Muoi Le  
Clergymember, Cao Dai Temple in Mountain View, Texas
2. Nguyen Dinh Thang, PhD  
Recipient of 2011 Asia Democracy & Human Rights Award
3. Minh Lê  
Retired French Didactician
4. Tien Nguyen  
Human Rights Defender
5. Hai Di Nguyen  
Writer and journalist, London, UK
6. Tanya Nguyen-Do  
Coordinator, Friends of Thiên Am Zen Monastery

7. Tam Truong  
Vietnamese jurist and a refugee
8. Dr. Trong Quang Phan  
President, Vietnamese American Community of the USA
9. Liem Ly  
Co-founder, Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam
10. Michelle Nguyen  
Advocacy Coordinator, Vietnam Coalition Against Torture (VN-CAT)
11. Loan Nguyen  
Co-founder, Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam
12. Quan Bui  
President, Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temple of Texas
13. Dr. Nguyen, Victoria D.Min.  
Founder, Cao Dai Today
14. Phu Huu Le  
Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temple of Texas
15. Binh Tran  
President of Antelope Valley Vietnamese Association
16. Thuy T Nguyen  
Committee to Unite Cao-Dai Disciples
17. Minh-Luong Nguyen  
Coordinator, Buddhist Solidarity Association
18. Loan Vo  
Coordinator, Buddhist Solidarity Association
19. Nguyen Bac Truyen  
Vietnamese jurist, former prisoner of conscience
20. Y Quynh Buon Dap  
Founder, Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ)
21. Nguyen Xuan Mai  
Religious Village Chief Administrator, Cao Dai Religion
22. Seo Gia, Vang  
Co-founder Hmong Human Rights Coalition
23. Nguyen Gia Quoc  
Vietnamese journalist, former prisoner of conscience
24. Mervyn Thomas CMG  
Founder President, CSW