

Cao Dai followers seek access to our temples in time for religion's centennial

Press Release, 22 February, 2024

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Next year will mark the centennial anniversary of our Cao Dai Religion, which was founded in 1926. Cao Dai followers inside Vietnam and around the world seek international support to regain access to our places of worship in time to commemorate this most important, once-in-a-lifetime occasion. Our central temple, known as the "Tay Ninh Holy See," and practically all our 300 local temples are being occupied by a religious sect created by the state in 1997

This sect was recently found by a United States court to be a "racketeering enterprise". Its members at all levels have committed innumerable atrocities against Cao Dai followers, including beating, abduction, attempted murder, trespassing, interfering with religious activities, expropriating property, demolishing graves, blocking funerals, etc. See: <https://dvov.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023.08.16-Judgement-signed.pdf>

A joint letter initiated by the International Religious Freedom Roundtable in support of our endeavor has been so far endorsed by 32 organizations and 79 individual signatories. To show support, please sign on at: <https://vnforb.org/joint-letter-on-centennial-of-cao-dai-religion-555/>

The aspiration of Cao Dai followers in Vietnam and among the diaspora is to celebrate the Centennial of our Cao Dai Religion at our Tay Ninh Holy See and our local temples throughout Vietnam. We plead with governments of the free world and their diplomatic missions in Vietnam as well as with UN agencies and international human rights organizations to support our efforts to regain access to our temples for that purpose.

A partial list of our temples being occupied by the state-created 1997 Sect is available at (in Vietnamese): <https://vnforb.org/danh-sach-cac-thanh-that-dien-tho-van-phong-va-co-so-cua-dao-cao-dai-bi-chi-phai-1997-chiem-551/>. We continue to update this list.

Enclosed: Joint letter endorsed by 127 organization and individual signatories



IRF ROUNDTABLE MULTI-FAITH LETTER ON VIETNAM'S PERSECUTION AND RESTRICTIONS ON CAO DAI FOLLOWERS DURING THEIR CENTENNIAL

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 100th 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. Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam (AFJV)
2. Asian Children's Education Fellowship, USA
3. Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
4. Buddhist Solidarity Association, Canada
5. Cao Dai Religion, USA
6. Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temples of Texas, USA
7. Cao Dai Temple Association of Washington State
8. Cao Dai Temple of Paris, France
9. Cao Dai Temple of Seattle, Washington
10. Cao Dai Today
11. Centre Culturel Cao Dai (CCCD), Belgium
12. Church of Scientology National Affairs Office, Washington DC
13. Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam
14. Committee of the Lay Dignitaries Overseas
15. Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, France
16. Criminal Justice Issues
17. CSW
18. Evangelical Church of Christ of the Central Highlands, Viet Nam
19. Former Political Prisoners Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
20. Helping Hands Committee 257, USA
21. Institute of CaoDai's History, Metropolitan Paris, France
22. Jubilee Campaign
23. Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ), Thailand
24. Overseas Liaison Office/Interfaith Council of VietNam, USA
25. Parity
26. Prayer Pioneers, USA

27. Save the Persecuted Christians, USA
28. Stefanus Alliance International, Norway
29. The Confederation of 1926 Caodaiists, USA
30. Tran Hung Dao Foundation
31. Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, Vietnam
32. United Council of Vietnamese Homeland and Overseas, USA
33. Uyghur Human Rights Project, USA
34. Vietnam Coalition Against Torture (VN-CAT)
35. Vietnamese Community of Houston & Vicinity, USA
36. Vietnamese Environmental Protection Society, USA
37. Vietnamese Women for Human Rights
38. Village Executive Committee Of CaoDai in Houston, USA

Individuals:

39. Professor David Alton, Lord of Liverpool
Independent Crossbench Member of the House of Lords, United Kingdom
40. Hon. Rollin Van Broekhoven, JD, LL.M., D.Phil., DPS (Hon), LL.D.
International Law Professor, China University of Political Science and Law
41. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Heiner Bielefeldt, Lehrstuhl für Menschenrechte und Menschenrechtspolitik
Institut für Politische Wissenschaft, Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
42. Rev. Huong Muoi Le, Clergy member
Cao Dai Temple in Mountain View, Texas, USA
43. Rev. Phung Van Phan, Archivist
Cao Dai Religion, Vietnam
44. Pastor A Ga, Founder
Evangelical Church of Christ of the Central Highlands, Viet Nam
45. Most Venerable Thich Thien Minh, former religious prisoner of conscience, Abbot
Loc Uyen Meditation Center, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
46. Most Venerable Thich Khong Tanh, Former Abbot
Lien Tri Temple, Viet Nam
47. Dede Laugesen, Executive Director
Save the Persecuted Christians, USA

48. Do Minh Duc
President, CEO of The Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Third
Amnesty of God of Tay Ninh Holy See, USA
49. Duong Xuan Luong
Cao Dai follower, former Religious Prisoner of Conscience
50. Grover Joseph Rees, Ambassador (retired)
USA
51. Binh Tran, President
Antelope Valley Vietnamese Association
52. Hulda Fahmi, International Director
Set My People Free, Sweden
53. Bui Thi Bich Thuy, Cao Dai Follower
Vietnam
54. Charlotte Hackett, student
Boston College
55. Cong Tang
Australia
56. Mervyn Thomas CMG
Founder President, CSW
57. Michelle Nguyen, Advocacy Coordinator
Vietnam Coalition Against Torture (VN-CAT)
58. Cuong Le, Cao Dai Follower
California, USA
59. Dinh Thi Kiem Nga, Cao Dai Follower
USA
60. Ms. Do Thi Inh
Former Chairwoman Village Executive Committee Of CaoDai in
Houston, USA
61. Dr. Do Hoi, President
Overseas Liaison Office/Interfaith Council of VietNam, USA
62. Dr. Nguyen, Victoria D.Min., Founder
Cao Dai Today
63. Dr. Tran, Quoc-Hung, Spokesperson
Unified Buddhist Church of VietNam, USA
64. Dr. Trong Quang Phan, President
Vietnamese American Community of the USA

65. Dr. Vo Dinh Huu MD, President
United Council of Vietnamese Homeland and Overseas, USA
66. Ducly Bui, President
Tran Hung Dao Foundation
67. Edwin Martinez, Owner
Criminal Justice Issues
68. Eleonora Sanchez
President, CEO of American Salvation Corporation
69. Elliot Toman
USA
70. Grace Snell, Presidential Scholar
Boston college, USA
71. Grant Holly, ACE Certified Personal Trainer
Roanoke, Virginia, USA
72. Hai Di Nguyen, Writer and Journalist
United Kingdom
73. The Hon. Kasit Piromya
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand
74. Hai Ly
USA
75. Juan Jimenez
IRF Roundtable, Colombia
76. Karl Ahlgren, volunteer
USA
77. Kathleen Ngo, President
Ngoc Thao & Canh Thien Herbs Inc., USA
78. Le Thanh long, Cao Dai Follower
Cao Dai Temple in Brisbane, Australia
79. Liem Ly, Co-founder
Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam
80. Linh Nguyen, Business Owner
81. Loan Nguyen, Co-founder
Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam
82. Loan Vo, Coordinator
Buddhist Solidarity Association
83. Minh Le, Retired French Didactician

84. Minh-Luong Nguyen, Coordinator
Buddhist Solidarity Association
85. Minhdao Le, VP External Affair
Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temples of Texas, USA
86. Nam Le, Sub-Dignitary
Committee of the Lay Dignitaries Overseas
87. Ngoc Dang, Former President
Canadian Vietnamese Veterans, Canada
88. Ngoc Huong Thi Duong, Cao Dai Follower
USA
89. Nguyen Bac Truyen
Vietnamese Hoa Hao Buddhist, Human Rights Jurist, Former
Religious Prisoner of Conscience from Vietnam, Germany
90. Nguyen Dinh Thang, PhD
Recipient of 2011 Asia Democracy & Human Rights Award
91. Nguyen Gia Quoc
Vietnamese journalist, former prisoner of conscience
92. Nguyen Phuc, Cao Dai Follower
Vietnam
93. Nguyen Van Ut, Cao Dai Follower
Vietnam
94. Nguyen Xuan Mai, Religious Village Chief Administrator
Cao Dai Religion, Vietnam
95. Nhan Nguyen, Chief
Cao Dai Temple of Seattle, WA
96. Nicholas Haley, Researcher
Falun Dafa Information Center
97. Pari Ibrahim, Director
Free Yezidi Foundation, Iraq
98. Phan Van Tranh, Cao Dai Follower
USA
99. Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen, Executive Director
Parity
100. Phong Thai
USA
101. Phu Huu Le, Cao Dai Follower
Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temple of Texas

102. Phu Nguyen, Brother
CDSC
103. Phuong Nguyen, Cao Dai Follower
USA
104. Quan Bui, President
Cao Dai Tay Ninh Temple of Texas
105. Quang Nguyen, Software Developer
Revolution
106. Y Quynh Buon Dap, Founder
Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ)
107. Dr. Robin Stoops
Associate General Secretary, American Baptist Church USA
108. Vang Seo Gia
Co-founder Hmong Human Rights Coalition
109. Taalibah Hassan
Multi-faith Network, USA
110. Tam Truong, Vietnamese jurist and a refugee
USA
111. Tanya Nguyen-Do, Coordinator
Friends of Thien Am Zen Monastery
112. Thao Dao, Herbal Specialist
Canh Thien Herbs Inc., USA
113. Thi Truong, Treasurer
Cao Dai Temple Association of WA
114. Thuy T Nguyen
Committee to Unite Cao-Dai Disciples
115. Tien Nguyen, Human Rights Defender
USA
116. Toe Toe, Senior Training Coordinator
Equality Myanmar
117. Tim Mai, president
Cao Dai Temple Association of WA
118. Tinh Do, Vietnamese Community Member
Vietnamese Community Houston & Vicinity, USA
119. Tran Quoc Tien, Religious Village Chief Administrator
Cao Dai Religion, Vietnam
120. Truong Nguyen, Cao Dai Follower

121. Valle Thierry, President
Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de
Conscience, France
122. Vui Nguyen
Head of Former Political Prisoners Association, New Orleans,
Louisiana, USA
123. Rev. Viet Nguyen, Catholic Priest
St. Petersburg, Florida, USA
124. Xuan An Nguyen, Cao Dai Follower
USA
125. Xuan Nguyen, Cao Dai Follower
USA
126. Vang Seo Gia
Co-founder Hmong Human Rights Coalition
127. Sara Pierson, Volunteer
Jubilee Campaign USA