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Geneva, 14 April 2014

Dear Special Rapporteurs,

We thank you for your continued dialogue, consultation and cooperation with states, including Viet Nam on matters of mutual concerns.

With reference to your letter Ref. UA G/SO 218/2, G/SO 214(56-23) Minorities (2005-4) VNM 2/2014 of 28.01.2014, regarding information you had received on "alleged arrests, threats and harassment against members of the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV) in Hue and Ho Chi Minh City", we would like to bring to your kind attention the replies from relevant authorities of Viet Nam as follows:

1. The information received and mentioned in the communication unfortunately does not reflect the truth. For all cases concerning individuals as named in the letter, it can be confirmed that there was no surveillance, harassment, threat or house arrest. In addition, until the date, the authorities have not received any letter of complaint from the concerned persons.

+ *Regarding the case of Mr. Le Cong Cau:*

On his check-in process on 01.01.2014 in Phu Bai Airport of Thua Thien Hue City, airport safety and security authorities found that Mr. Le carried several items which were not allowed for boarding according to current regulations. The authorities then made the minutes/report of the violation and did not allow Mr. Le to board the flight, in light of safety concerns for the others. The case was then transferred to relevant authorities for taking declaration and statements. However, at the working session, the authorities received no cooperation from Mr. Le, but his defiance instead. The process was therefore taking longer than expected and lasted until the evening 01.01.2014 before which Mr. Le returned home on the same day.

Authorities of Viet Nam have shown the respect of exercises of freedoms of religion, expression and freedom of travel of Mr. Le Cong Cau. However, the same as in other countries, violation of aviation safety and security need to be promptly dealt with, in order to ensure the security and safety of all the others.

Mr. Mads Andenas,

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Mr. Maina Kiai,

Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt,

Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

Ms. Izak Rita,

Independent Expert on minority issues.

Mr. Le currently lives a normal life and practices religion as usual. He enjoys all the rights and freedoms as all other Vietnamese. There is no probation or house arrest as alleged in the communication.

+ *Regarding the case of Mr. Thich Quang Do:*

It can be confirmed that Mr. Thich Quang Do also currently lives a normal life, practices religion and enjoys all rights and freedoms as all others in Ho Chi Minh City. The information and allegation regarding Mr. Thich Quang Do, as mentioned in the communication, is therefore inaccurate and irrelevant.

+ *With regard to the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV):*

In fact and by existing laws, there is no longer such "Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam" after the National Buddhist Congress in 1981 that unified 09 Buddhist sects, including the former Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam, to form the current Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam (BSV). By law, the Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam is the only legal Buddhist organization which represents for the more than 10 million followers in Viet Nam, regardless of their origins of Northern or Southern schools, the mendicants or Khmer Buddhism. After the Congress, spiritual leaders of these former sects have participated and become leaders in the current Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam.

In fact, some individuals, self-claimed members of the unrecognized UBCV, having attempted to re-install their former organization, have acted against the regulations and tenets of the BSV. Therefore, the several individuals with self-claims of representing the UBCV tried organizing their own activities at the Memorial Day ceremony on 10 January 2014 at Long Quang Pagoda, in Thua Thien Hue City, met with strong resistance from the other monks and Buddhist believers, which led to quarrels. Respecting the religion, authorities did not intervene in their internal disputes but strengthen measures for public order and security in and around the place for the other participants.

2. Viet Nam reaffirms its consistent policy of respecting and promoting all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, belief and association. Viet Nam guarantees the equality among religions and protects their belief practices as stipulated by laws. Article 25 of Viet Nam's 2013 Constitutions stipulates that "the citizen shall enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of press, to access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations. The practice of these rights shall be provided by the law". Article 24 on freedom of religions reads: "everyone shall enjoy freedom of belief and of religion, following or not following any religion. All religions are equal before the law. The State respects and protects 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".

Religious and belief practices and other related activities have enjoyed freedom and develop fast in Viet Nam. Viet Nam guarantees, protects and provides with favorable conditions for religious activities with specific measures and policies, including the Decree No. 92/2012/ND-CP with specific details on the implementation of the 2004 Ordinance on beliefs and religion of the National Assembly for religious practices and favorable conditions for places of belief establishment. In the meantime, National Assembly of Viet Nam has planned in its current 13th tenure for the revision of the Ordinance for further promotion and protection of religions and beliefs.

Each year, there are about 8,500 religious festivals at national and regional levels. The Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam will host the UN Vesak Day in May 2014. All religious organizations are encouraged and provided with favorable conditions to participate in religious, belief, cultural and social activities, including those for education, health care and

humanitarian supports. Dignitaries and representatives of religions in Viet Nam have participated in a number of international forums and dialogues on religions and beliefs for exchanging on practices of tenets, principles and rites of religions, such as those from ASEM and ASEAN. They have also participated in several other religious trainings in other countries, including the United States, Italia, India and France.

Efforts, commitments and achievements of Viet Nam on freedom of religions and beliefs have been widely recognized by international community, including encouraging appraisals from other states to Viet Nam during her 2nd UPR session in last February 2014 at the Council.

We hope that the above information would help to further clarify the questions of your concerns./.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of stylized, flowing letters that appear to read 'TTN' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

THANH T. NGUYEN
Ambassador, Permanent Representative