

ALTERNATIVE REPORT
to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR)

In response to the List of Issues
Related to the Government of Vietnam's 4th periodic report



May 2025

Boat People SOS (BPSOS), founded by former refugees from Vietnam in 1980, is headquartered in the Washington DC Metro Region with branches located in multiple U.S. cities and operates in Thailand through the Thai non-profit People Serving People Foundation. BPSOS' international initiatives include refugee protection in Thailand, combating human trafficking in Asia, defending religious freedom in Southeast Asia, and building capacity for persecuted communities in Vietnam.

Website: <https://www.bpsos.org/>

Email: bpsos@bpsos.org, primary contact: percy@vncrp.org

Buddhist Solidarity Association (BSA) supports persecuted Buddhists in Vietnam through international networking with human rights NGOs, the Article 18 Alliance of national governments promoting international religious freedom, and others, and reporting official and non-state actors' persecution and intimidation to the UN and others. BSA was formed in 2018, with participation by Buddhists from all walks of life in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia sharing the same religious beliefs and with the common desire that the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Khmer Krom Buddhist communities, and other unregistered Buddhist groups in Vietnam will soon be able to practice their religion without unequal treatment, discrimination, and attain happiness and prosperity.

Email: Loanvobsa@gmail.com

The Friends of Thien Am Monastery at The Edge of The Universe in Vietnam are actively advocating for 30 members of the Thien Am communities, who have recently faced challenges from the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Mrs. Tanya Nguyen Do, a dedicated leader in this effort, has been involved in key forums such as the International Religious Freedom Roundtable and the International Religious Freedom Summits. She has also engaged in constructive dialogue with representatives from the United States Department of State and various United Nations committees, focusing on the evaluation of Vietnam's compliance with international human rights covenants.

Email: tanyanguyendo311@gmail.com

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Section I. REPRESSION OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT AND TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION OF MOVEMENT BY VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA.....	5
1. Vietnam stopped Vietnamese citizens from attending the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington, DC scheduled for early February 2025.....	5
Translation of the travel ban decision to Thich Nhat Phuoc.....	9
2. Vietnam stopped Vietnamese citizens from going to provide relief to earthquake victims in Myanmar.....	10
Translation for the travel ban of Thich Nguyen Ly.....	11
3. Transnational Repression By VBS To Deny Freedom Of Movement Of Mendicant Buddhist Minh Tue And Followers.....	13
Section II. OTHER FREEDOM OF RELIGION ISSUES INVOLVING VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA AND THE GOVERNMENT.....	23
1. The case of Abbott Thich Minh Nguyen, who got banned from his temple.....	23
2. VBS attacked the High Venerable Thich Minh Dao for his support of the Dutanga monk.....	24
3. VBS targeted Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe - Victims of Religious Freedom Persecution:.....	26
Section III. Discrimination against Khmer Krom - Vietnam Targeting Khmer Krom Buddhists And Temples.....	29
Appendix 1.....	32
Translation of VBS statement about Monk Minh Tue.....	33
Translation of MOHA statement about Monk Minh Tue.....	37
Appendix 2. Announcement of May 2025 Trials of Two Currently Imprisoned Victims from the Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe (Thien Am).....	39

Introduction

We would like to submit information on misdeeds by the Vietnamese Government and the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), a state-controlled religious organization which had taken over nearly all the Buddhist temples previously owned by the now banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) which had a long operating history in the former Republic of Vietnam (non-communist South Vietnam) up until 1975 when Communist North Vietnam occupied South Vietnam.

This report focuses on the following:

- Discriminating against independent Buddhist groups such as the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and Khmer Krom congregations, e.g., supporting foreign trips of VBS representatives while banning UBCV representatives from foreign travel or preventing a congregation from being served by its US-based abbot. Issue 16 (freedom of movement)
- Tolerating (and likely colluding with) unlawful actions by the state-controlled VBS, e.g., when VBS attempted and succeeded in using demonstrable lies to urge some Southeast Asian governments to restrict a group of Vietnamese Dhutanga Buddhists from walking and practicing some of their Dhutanga practices in those countries
- Continuing to persecute imprisoned members of the Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe, victims of both VBS and the Vietnamese government. Issues 11, 12 (mistreatment in detention), and 17 (independence and overall functioning of the judicial system). This small Buddhist group should perhaps be viewed as followers of a unique religion distinct from Buddhist, but retaining certain Buddhist beliefs (like Catholicism vs Protestantism). Vietnam also continues to intimidate and terrorize members who have not been imprisoned through unlawful unannounced police entry and searches.

Section I. REPRESSION OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT AND TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION OF MOVEMENT BY VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA

VBS members are allowed to go abroad, whereas UBCV members are frequently blocked from attending international religious freedom events, the latest case involving Monk Thich Nhat Phuoc of UBCV. The report on this violation was submitted to SR-FoRB in early 2025 and extracts from it are shown below (see more in Section I of Appendix A to this report; the appendices document was sent as a second attachment to our email.).

1. Vietnam stopped Vietnamese citizens from attending the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington, DC scheduled for early February 2025.

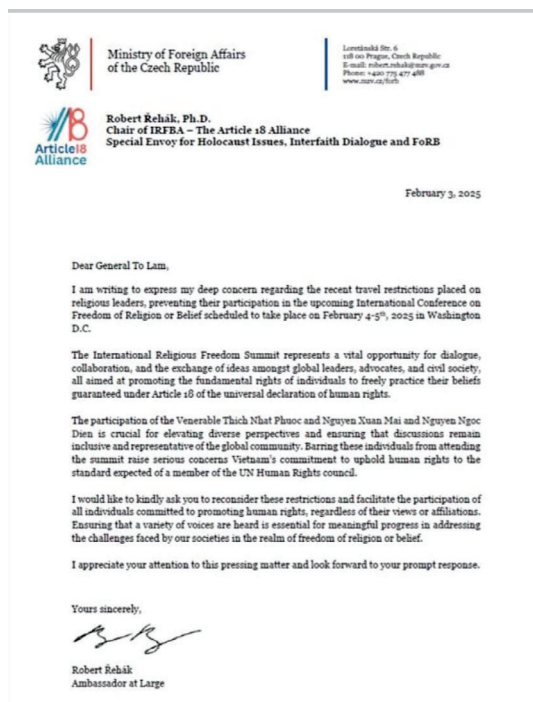
Communist Vietnam persecutes various churches (Buddhist, Protestant, Cao Dai, and so on) to drive adherents towards the registered organizations that are subservient to the Vietnamese Communist Party such as the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the Cao Dai sect established by the VCP in 1997. Leaders from state-controlled churches freely travel abroad to voice support for the regime whereas representatives of the targeted churches are interrogated, fined, harassed, detained, and/or banned from attending religious freedom conferences in other countries.

In the December 2023 report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee mentioned Khmer Krom victims of travel ban:¹

“The Committee is concerned that individuals belonging to ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups, including Khmer-Krom monks who attempted to travel to teach language classes and individuals working on the rights of ethnic minorities who attempted to attend a conference abroad, have been prevented from leaving Viet Nam on the basis of the Law on Entry and Exit of Vietnamese Citizens (No. 49/2019/QH14).”

his blatant violation of Article 18 of the ICCPR resulted in the following letter from the Article 18 Alliance chair to the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Mr. To Lam:

¹ <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/document/7f63e2b7-3c59-42b6-901d-559f8e5a9f15>



Letter from Article 18 Alliance (Amb. Rehák) to Mr. To Lam.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

Loretinská Str. 6
118 00 Pragar, Czech Republic
E-mail: robert.rehak.....
Phone: +420 775 477 488

Robert Řehák, Ph.D.

Chair of IRFBA-The Article 18 Alliance

Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Interfaith Dialogue and FORB

February 3, 2025

Dear General To Lam,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent travel restrictions placed on religious leaders, preventing their participation in the upcoming International Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief scheduled to take place on February 4-5, 2025 in Washington D.C.

The International Religious Freedom Summit represents a vital opportunity for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas amongst global leaders, advocates, and civil society, all

aimed at promoting the fundamental rights of individuals to freely practice their beliefs guaranteed under Article 18 of the universal declaration of human rights.

The participation of the Venerable Thich Nhat Phuoc and Nguyen Xuan Mai and Nguyen Ngoc Dien is crucial for elevating diverse perspectives and ensuring that discussions remain inclusive and representative of the global community. Barring these individuals from attending the summit raises serious concerns Vietnam's commitment to uphold human rights to the standard expected of a member of the UN Human Rights council.

I would like to kindly ask you to reconsider these restrictions and facilitate the participation of all individuals committed to promoting human rights, regardless of their views or affiliations. Ensuring that a variety of voices are heard is essential for meaningful progress in addressing the challenges faced by our societies in the realm of freedom of religion or belief.

I appreciate your attention to this pressing matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Řehák

Ambassador at Large

Travel Suspension Decision of Port-of-Entry Police at Tan Son Nhat International Airport against Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Phuoc (legal name: Nguyen Thanh Cuong) - January 2025

CỤC QUẢN LÝ XUẤT NHẬP CẢNH
CÔNG AN CỬA KHẨU CẢNG
HKQT TÂN SƠN NHẤT
Số: 356/BBTHXC-TSN

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc
Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, ngày 26 tháng 01 năm 2025

BIÊN BẢN
Về việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh

Căn cứ Luật số 49/2019/QH14 ngày 22 tháng 11 năm 2019 của Quốc hội về xuất cảnh, nhập cảnh của công dân Việt Nam.

Hôm nay, hồi 22 giờ 32 phút, ngày 26/01/2025, tại Trụ sở làm việc của Công an cửa khẩu Cảng hàng không quốc tế Tân Sơn Nhất.

Chúng tôi gồm:

- Ông: Nguyễn Tiến Sỹ, Chức vụ: Phó Trưởng Công an cửa khẩu;
- Ông: Lê Đức Thọ, Chức vụ: Cán bộ Công an cửa khẩu;

Có sự chứng kiến của Ông: Nguyễn Văn Tuyên, đại diện hãng hàng không Việt Nam tại sân bay quốc tế Tân Sơn Nhất.

Tiến hành lập biên bản tạm hoãn xuất cảnh đối với:

Ông: Nguyễn Thanh Cường; sinh ngày: 02/09/1992; quốc tịch: Việt Nam; hộ chiếu số: E02074625 do Cục Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh cấp ngày 21/06/2024; nơi ở hiện tại: Tân An, Phước Tân, Xuyên Mộc, Bà Rịa Vũng Tàu.

Là hành khách trên chuyến bay VN408 của Hãng hàng không Việt Nam dự kiến xuất cảnh đi Incheon (Hàn Quốc) lúc 22 giờ 55 phút.

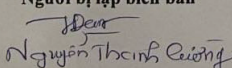
Lý do:

Ông Nguyễn Thanh Cường bị tạm hoãn xuất cảnh: Vì lý do quốc phòng, an ninh, quy định tại Điều 36 của Luật số 49/2019/QH14 quy định về các trường hợp bị tạm hoãn xuất cảnh.

Căn cứ khoản 5 Điều 39 Luật số 49/2019/QH14 quy định về trách nhiệm tổ chức thực hiện việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh của Cơ quan Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh Bộ Công an. Công an cửa khẩu Cảng HKQT Tân Sơn Nhất tiến hành việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh đối với Ông Nguyễn Thanh Cường.

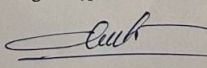
Mọi đề nghị của Ông Nguyễn Thanh Cường liên quan đến việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh yêu cầu liên hệ với Phòng Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh Công an Bà Rịa Vũng Tàu để được giải quyết.

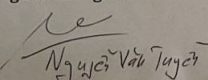
Biên bản kết thúc hồi 22 giờ 39 phút cùng ngày, được lập thành 02 bản có nội dung, giá trị như nhau. 01 bản giao cho người bị lập biên bản, 01 bản lưu tại đơn vị lập biên bản, đã đọc lại cho những người có tên trong biên bản cùng nghe công nhận là đúng và cùng ký tên dưới đây./.

Người bị lập biên bản

Nguyễn Thanh Cường

Người quyết định

Thượng tá Nguyễn Tiến Sỹ

Người lập biên bản

Trung tá Lê Đức Thọ

Người chứng kiến

Nguyễn Văn Tuyên

Travel Ban targeting Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Phuoc

Translation of the travel ban decision to Thich Nhat Phuoc

FOREIGN TRAVEL MANAGEMENT & **SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**
IMMIGRATION BUREAU **Independence-Liberty-Happiness**
PORT-OF-ENTRY POLICE

TAN SON NHAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT *HCM City, 26 January 2025*

No. 356/BBTHXC-TSN

DECISION

Re. Suspension of Foreign Travel

Pursuant to Law 49/2019 /QH14 dated 22 November 2019 by the National Assembly on Vietnamese nationals' foreign travel,

Today, 26 January 2025, at 22:32 at the office of the Port-of-Entry Police, Tan Son Nhat International Airport, we,

1. Nguyễn Tiến Sỹ, Deputy Chief of Port-of-Entry Police;
2. Lê Đức Thọ, officer, Port-of-Entry Police;

In the presence of Mr. Nguyễn Văn Tuyên, a representative of Vietnam Airlines at Tan Son Nhat International Airport;

Prepared this document on the suspension of foreign travel by:

Mr. Nguyễn Thanh Cường, born on 2 September 1992 Citizen of: Vietnam

Passport No. E02074625 issued on 21 June 2024 by Foreign Travel Management & Immigration Bureau; his address: Tân An, Phước Tân, Xuyên Mộc, Bà Rịa Vũng Tàu.

He is a passenger on Flight VN408 of Vietnam Airlines, destination: Incheon (Republic of Korea), departure time: 22:55.

Reason:

Mr. Nguyễn Thanh Cường is suspended from foreign travel for national defense and security reasons pursuant to Article 36 of Law 49/2019/QH14 related to foreign travel suspension cases.

Pursuant to Clause 5 of Article 39 of Law 49/2019/QH14 related to the responsibility of implementing foreign travel suspension of the Foreign Travel Management & Immigration

Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, the port-of-entry Police at Tan Son Nhat International Airport hereby enforces the suspension of foreign travel by Mr. Nguyễn Thanh Cường.

For all your requests and complaints related to the foreign travel suspension, you should contact the Foreign Travel Management & Immigration Office of the Police Department of Bà Rịa Vũng Tàu Province.

This document was completed at 22:39 on the same day and produced as two copies with equal legal standing, one of which for the individual targeted by the decision. This document was read aloud to the undersigned who concurred with its accuracy.

Person targeted by the decision preparer	Decision authority	Document
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Nguyễn Thanh Cường Thọ	Senior Lt-Colonel Nguyễn Tiến Sỹ	Lt-Colonel Lê Đức
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Observer

Nguyễn Văn Tuyền

2. Vietnam stopped Vietnamese citizens from going to provide relief to earthquake victims in Myanmar

The Most Venerable Thich Nguyen Ly (secular name Ngo Van Su), who leads the Projects Office in the Secretariat of the unregistered UBCV. He continues to lead the Projects Office in the Secretariat of the Leader of the unregistered UBCV in spite of official persecution and attempts to make him join the government-controlled Vietnam Buddhist Sangha which is the officially recognized Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

Most Ven. Thích Nguyên Lý never wavers in his strong support for religious freedom for UBCV and all the other faiths, and other human rights so that the Vietnamese people can be happy and prosperous. He serves the poor through leading humanitarian projects such as distributing essentials to flood victims in Vietnam even after yielding to the government's order to forgo using UBCV, his organization's name, when involved in such projects.

His other achievements include the renovation of three unregistered Buddhist temples 15-30 years ago. He previously served as the UBCV Financial Director and Humanitarian Projects Leader until 2018.

On 21 April, 2025, the police intercepted him at the Tan Son Nhut Airport and announced that he was placed under a temporary travel ban for national defense and security reasons pursuant to Article 36 of the Law on temporary travel ban (49/2019/QH14). He was on his way to provide relief to earthquake victims in Myanmar.

CỤC QUẢN LÝ XUẤT NHẬP CẢNH CÔNG AN CỬA KHẨU CẢNG HKQT TÂN SƠN NHẤT Số: 1298 /BBTHXC-TSN	CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, ngày 21 tháng 04 năm 2025
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BIÊN BẢN
Về việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh

Căn cứ Luật số 49/2019/QH14 ngày 22 tháng 11 năm 2019 của Quốc hội về xuất cảnh, nhập cảnh của công dân Việt Nam.

Hôm nay, hồi 07 giờ 28 phút, ngày 21/04/2025, tại Trụ sở làm việc của Công an cửa khẩu Cảng hàng không quốc tế Tân Sơn Nhất.

Chúng tôi gồm:

- Ông: Phạm Quốc Hùng, Chức vụ: Phó Trưởng Công an cửa khẩu;
- Ông: Ninh Ngọc Chung, Chức vụ: Cán bộ Công an cửa khẩu;

Có sự chứng kiến của Ông: Nguyễn Hoàng Ngọc, đại diện hãng hàng không Vietjet tại sân bay quốc tế Tân Sơn Nhất.

Tiến hành lập biên bản tạm hoãn xuất cảnh đối với:

Ông: **Ngô Văn Sự**, sinh ngày: 17/07/1953; quốc tịch: Việt Nam; hộ chiếu số: P00506236 do Cục Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh cấp ngày 27/09/2022; nơi ở hiện tại: chùa Từ Hiếu, 59 Dương Bá Trạc, Phường 1, Quận 8, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Là hành khách trên chuyến bay VJ801 của Hãng hàng không Vietjet dự kiến xuất cảnh đi Bangkok (Thái Lan) lúc 11 giờ 30 phút.

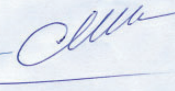
Lý do:

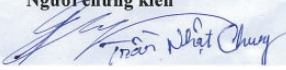
Ông Ngô Văn Sự bị tạm hoãn xuất cảnh: Vì lý do quốc phòng, an ninh, quy định tại Điều 36 của Luật số 49/2019/QH14 quy định về các trường hợp bị tạm hoãn xuất cảnh.

Căn cứ khoản 5 Điều 39 Luật số 49/2019/QH14 quy định về trách nhiệm tổ chức thực hiện việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh của Cơ quan Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh Bộ Công an. Công an cửa khẩu Cảng HKQT Tân Sơn Nhất tiến hành việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh đối với Ông Ngô Văn Sự.

Mọi đề nghị của Ông Ngô Văn Sự liên quan đến việc tạm hoãn xuất cảnh yêu cầu liên hệ với Cục Quản lý xuất nhập cảnh (333-335 Nguyễn Trãi, phường Nguyễn Cư Trinh, Quận 1, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh) để được giải quyết.

Biên bản kết thúc hồi 07 giờ 35 phút cùng ngày, được lập thành 02 bản có nội dung, giá trị như nhau. 01 bản giao cho người bị lập biên bản, 01 bản lưu tại đơn vị lập biên bản, đã đọc lại cho những người có tên trong biên bản cùng nghe công nhận là đúng và cùng ký tên dưới đây./.

Người bị lập biên bản  Ngô Văn Sự	Người quyết định  Thượng tá Phạm Quốc Hùng	Người lập biên bản  Trung tá Ninh Ngọc Chung
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Người chứng kiến

Nguyễn Hoàng Ngọc

Translation for the travel ban of Thich Nguyen Ly

IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT PORT
POLICE
TAN SON NHAT INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT
Number: 1298/BBTHXC-TSN

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness
Ho Chi Minh City, April 21, 2025

REPORT

Regarding temporary exit from the country

Pursuant to Law No. 49/2019/QH14 dated November 22, 2019 of the National Assembly on exit and entry of Vietnamese citizens.

Today, at 07:28, April 21, 2025, at the Office of the Tan Son Nhat International Airport Border Police.

We include:

1. Mr. Pham Quoc Hung, Position: Deputy Head of Border Police;
2. Mr. Ninh Ngoc Chung, Position: Border Police Officer

Witnessed by Mr. Nguyen Hoang Ngoc, representative of Vietjet Air at Tan Son Nhat International Airport.

Make a record of temporary suspension of exit for:

Mr. Ngo Van Su, date of birth: July 17, 1953; nationality: Vietnam; passport number: P00506236 issued by the Immigration Department on September 27, 2022; current residence: Tu Hieu Pagoda, 59 Duong Ba Trac, Ward 1, District 8, Ho Chi Minh City. Passenger on Vietjet Air flight VJ801 scheduled to depart for Bangkok (Thailand) at 11:30 am.

Reason:

Mr. Ngo Van Su was temporarily suspended from leaving the country: For reasons of national defense and security, Article 36 of Law No. 49/2019/QH14 stipulates cases of temporary suspension from leaving the country.

Pursuant to Clause 5, Article 39 of Law No. 49/2019/QH14 stipulating the responsibility of the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Public Security to organize the temporary suspension of exit. Tan Son Nhat International Airport Border Guard conducted the temporary suspension of exit for Mr. Ngo Van Su.

Any request from Mr. Ngo Van Su related to temporary suspension of exit from the country is requested to contact the Immigration Department (333-335 Nguyen Trai, Nguyen Cu Trinh Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City) for resolution.

The minutes ended at 07:35 on the same day, and were made into 02 copies with the same content and value. 01 copy was given to the person whose minutes were made, 01 copy was kept

at the unit that made the minutes, and was read to the people whose names were in the minutes to acknowledge that they were correct and sign below./.

Decider

Minute maker

Ngo Van Su

Lieutenant Colonel Pham Quoc Hung

Lieutenant Colonel Ninh Ngoc Chun

3. Transnational Repression By VBS To Deny Freedom Of Movement Of Mendicant Buddhist Minh Tue And Followers

To reconcile between public materials about Minh Tue treating him as a monk versus other sources (primarily controlled by the Vietnamese government) clarifying that he is not a monk, a short discussion follows. Ordained Buddhist monks use the religious family name “Thich” adopted from the “Sa” syllable in Buddha’s name “Sakya Muni”. Lay Buddhists may not do so, nor may they wear monk robes. Although Mr. Le Anh Tu, aka Minh Tue, has never claimed to be a monk, many people call him “Thich Minh Tue” out of respect for his monk-like way of life based on the mendicant monk tradition. Vietnam’s official government television posted articles clarifying that he was not a monk, but still referred to him as “Thich Minh Tue”.² Overseas media do the same.³

A Vietnam ascetic, who has gained widespread acclaim from the ordinary public in his country for his simple lifestyle, is facing obstacles as he is walking across Sri Lanka to reach the Buddha’s birthplace in India. Known popularly by the sobriquet Thich Minh Tue, the ascetic reportedly walked across Vietnam at least four times, over several years before some youtubers and tictokers noticed in 2024 and started following him around bringing him to national and international attention. The ascetic, who’s birth name is said to be Lê Anh Tú, walks barefoot, and is dressed in robes made of scraps of different cloth given to him by people on his travels. His alms bowl is the inner container of a rice cooker.

The ascetic has run into controversy with an established Buddhist order in Vietnam after netizens who started compare his simple life style with those in the establishment. According to reports Minh Tuệ has not claimed to be an official monk, but only a student of Buddhist teachings is following dhutanga practices. Though others refer to him as ‘Thích’ (Venerable) he always refers

² <https://vtv.vn/xa-hoi/thong-tin-xuyen-tac-an-tu-cua-ong-thich-minh-tue-20240608203502247.htm>

³ An online posting with updated information on Minh Tue is translated below to give the reader a feel for his situation. <https://economynext.com/vietnams-famed-walking-ascetic-minh-tue-in-sri-lanka-amid-obstacles-216441/>

to himself simply as ‘con’ in the way students refer to themselves when addressing teachers, reports say.

Vietnam regional authorities also reportedly urged Minh Tuệ to stop walking last year as large crowds followed him when he entered larger townships bringing city traffic to a standstill. For a while he disappeared off the main roads, leading to speculation and concern among his internet followers. In December 2024, Minh Tuệ started a pilgrimage to India walking across several countries including Laos and Thailand.

After landing in Sri Lanka he started walking across the island towards Jaffna. Youtube videos show he arrived in Sri Lanka from Singapore. According to a senior monk from the Ambarukkarama Temple of Mugurugampala in Sri Lanka who is helping the ascetic, the group is facing difficulties after another senior Sri Lankan monk asked temples not to harbour him. The group of over 30 ascetics and Vietnamese lay followers had landed in Sri Lanka on April 12 and also stayed at his own Temple on New Year’s day.

“From our observations these people are very harmless, responsible, and act with much discipline. They are engaged in Dhutanga practices and are walking barefoot. We thought we should treat these visitors from Vietnam as befits our traditions of hospitality. If some harm befalls them it is not good for the honour of our country. But following some communications with a Bhikkhu in Vietnam with one of our Bhikkhus, a wrong impression has been created, there has been some problems caused to the lay Vietnamese persons who followed them. Some temples have also refused to accommodate them. So two of us from our temple decided to stay with them and help them until they leave our country and treat them with kindness and compassion.”

VBS letter in English dated 13 April 2025 to Sri Lankan Buddhist Church in which VBS falsely accuses mendicant Buddhist Minh Tue of violating Vietnamese and religious laws through “impersonating a Buddhist monk, attempting to establish a dissident sect, and being a threat to public order.” Signed by Most Ven. Thich Nhat Tu, Chairman of VBS International Buddhist Department. Thich Nhat Tu is a key (false) denouncer of the small Buddhist group Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe, resulting in the imprisonment of nearly all male adult monks and the 92-year old founder. The false accusations of Dhutanga practitioner Minh Tue caused him and his companions difficulties with Sri Lanka police and Buddhists.

Sri Lanka no longer allows independent Dhutanga Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue to walk on public roads due to Vietnamese state-endorsed monk’s letter⁴

“A Vietnamese Buddhist monk on a barefoot pilgrimage from his homeland to India ran into some unexpected opposition in Sri Lanka on the latest leg of his circuitous journey

⁴ Itinerant Vietnamese monk meets opposition in Sri Lanka - from a fellow monk
<https://www.rfa.org/english/vietnam/2025/04/16/vietnam-srilanka-monk-dispute/>

around Asia. A witness told Radio Free Asia that when the Vietnamese Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue and his entourage were about to go to a local Hindu temple to rest, a local monk, claiming to be from the Sri Lankan Buddhist Sangha, came to the temple and asked that he not stay. Local Sri Lankans objected, taking sides with their Vietnamese visitor. The Sri Lankan monk then took out his phone and read the contents of a letter allegedly sent by Thich Nhat Tu, a representative of the state-backed Vietnam Buddhist Sangha – or religious association - to the Sri Lankan Sangha, to justify his demand that Minh Tue leave the leafy temple compound in Giriulla, a town about 30 miles northeast of the capital Colombo...”

By RFA Vietnamese



A fairly senior Sri Lankan police officer holding the English language letter sent by VBS Senior Monk Thich Nhat Tu to the Sri Lankan Buddhist Church with many false accusations. The police officer did not allow the 37-person team to continue their Dhutanga walk, “because you only hold visitor visas.”⁵

⁵ The photos shown next are from videos posted on Youtube. <https://youtu.be/A4akFinX45E>



One of the two sympathetic Sri Lankan Buddhist monks was trying to help the 37-member team on 17 April 2025.

The Thai Buddhist Church also fell into the trap set by VBS when it warned about Minh Tue when the monk and his group of followers walked into Thailand.

This is the typed transcription of the letter from VBS to an influential regional leader of the Buddhist Church of Sri Lanka:

Ho Chi Minh City, April 13, 2025

The Mahanayaka Thero of the Malwatta chapter

Re: Request for Intervention regarding Mr. Le Anh Tu's Alleged Violations of Vietnamese Law and Buddhist Vinaya

Your Most Ven,

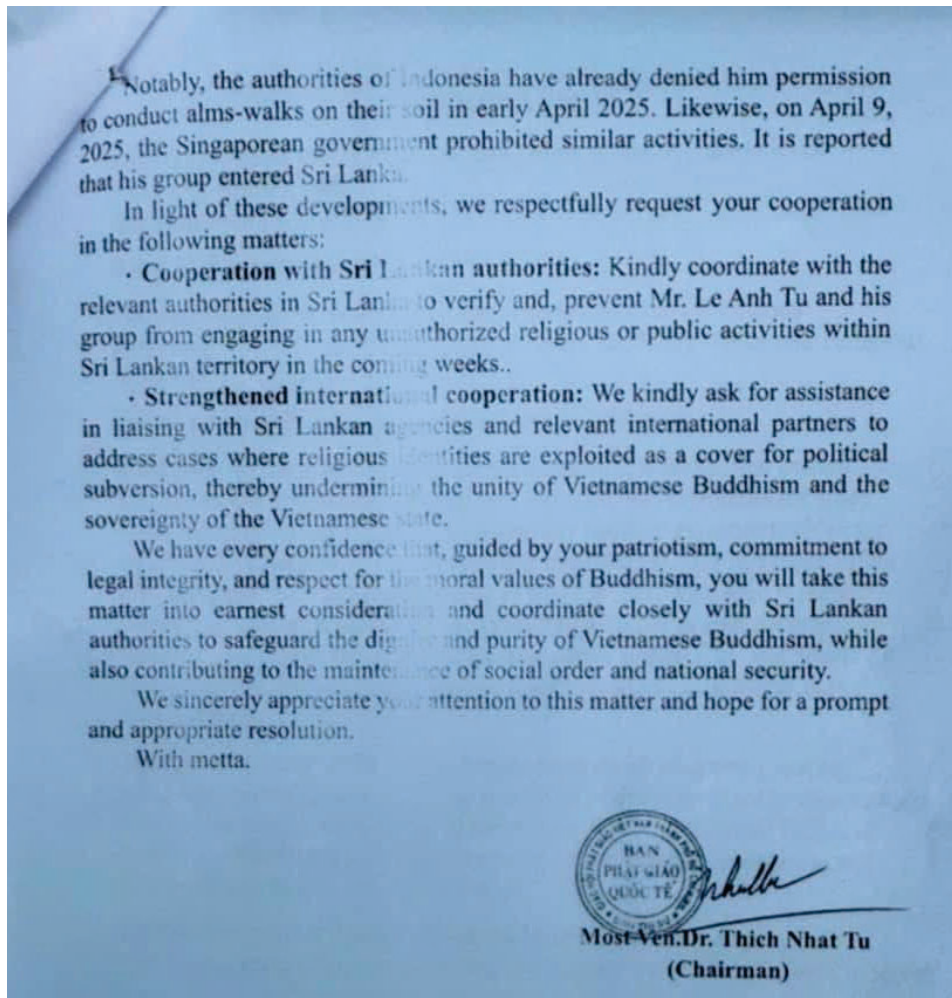
The Committee for International Buddhist Affairs of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha – Ho Chi Minh City Chapter respectfully submits this letter to you to present several matters of serious concern relating to the actions of Mr. Le Anh Tu (aka. Thich Minh Tue), who has been publicly donning monastic robes despite never having undergone ordination as prescribed by the Vinaya.

Based on our verified documentation, we respectfully outline the following points:

1. Impersonation of a Buddhist monk: Mr. Le Anh Tu has unlawfully donned Buddhist monastic robes without having formally received either the *Sāmanera* or *Bhikkhu* ordination in accordance with the Vinaya (Buddhist monastic code). This action constitutes a serious breach of Buddhist ethical standards and contradicts the Law on Belief and Religion of Vietnam. Enclosed herewith is a memorandum from the Office of the National Buddhism of Thailand, clearly affirming that Mr. Le Anh Tu is not recognized as a legitimate monk but merely a person impersonating one.

2. Attempt to establish a dissident sect and cause division: Mr. Le Anh Tu has demonstrated intentions to found a self-proclaimed sect known as the "Ascetic Sect," which is neither in alignment with Vietnamese religious regulations nor compliant with Buddhist monastic discipline. In recent months, he has gathered approximately 30 individuals with questionable backgrounds to join his alms-walking groups, thereby damaging the reputation and unity of Vietnamese Buddhism.

3. Threats to public order and national reputation: According to credible Vietnamese media reports, Mr. Le Anh Tu was previously involved in disrupting public order in 2023 in Vietnam. Currently, he is being supported by antigovernment individuals and organizations based in the United States, Australia, and other overseas communities, who seek to use his image to discredit the Vietnamese government and divide the Buddhist Sangha.



VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

HO CHI MINH CITY

Independence - Freedom - Happiness

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST DEPARTMENT

No. 12/2025CV-BPGQT

Ho Chi Minh City, 11 April 2025

The Mahanayaka Thero of the Malwatta chapter

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Your Most Ven.,

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concern relating to the actions of Mr. Le Anh Tu (aka Thich Minh Tue) who has been publicly donning monastic robes despite never having undergone ordination prescribed by the Vinaya.

Based on our verified documentation, we respectfully outline the following points:

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2. Attempt to establish a dissident sect and cause division: Mr. Le Anh Tu has demonstrated intention to found a self-proclaimed sect known as the “Ascetic Sect” which is neither in alignment with Vietnamese religious regulations nor compliant with Buddhist monastic discipline. In recent months, he has gathered approximately 30 individuals with questionable backgrounds, to join his alms-walking group, thereby damaging the reputation and unity of Vietnamese Buddhism.

3. Threats to public order and national reputation: According to credible Vietnamese media reports, Mr. Le Anh Tu was previously involved in disrupting public order in Vietnam in 2024. Currently he is being supported by anti-state individuals and organizations based in the United States, Australia, and other overseas communities, who seek to use his image to discredit the Vietnamese government and divide the Buddhist Sangha.

Notably, the authorities of Indonesia have already denied him permission to conduct alms-walks on the soil in early April 2025. Likewise, on April 9, 2025, the Singaporean government prohibited similar activities. It is reported that his group entered Sri Lanka.

In light of these developments, we respectfully request your cooperation in the following matters:

- **Cooperation with Sri Lankan authorities:** Kindly coordinate with the relevant authorities in Sri Lanka to verify and prevent Mr. Le Anh Tu and his group from engaging in any unauthorized religious or public activities within Sri Lankan territory in the coming weeks.
- **Strengthened international cooperation:** We kindly ask for assistance in liaising with Sri Lankan authorities and relevant international partners to address cases where religious activities are exploited as a cover for political subversion, thereby undermining the unity of Vietnamese Buddhism and the sovereignty of the Vietnamese state.

We have every confidence, guided by your patriotism, commitment to legal integrity, and respect for the moral values of Buddhism, you will take this matter into earnest consideration and coordinate closely with Sri Lankan authorities to safeguard the dignity and purity of Vietnamese Buddhism, while also contributing to the maintenance of social order and national security.

We sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and hope for a prompt and appropriate resolution.

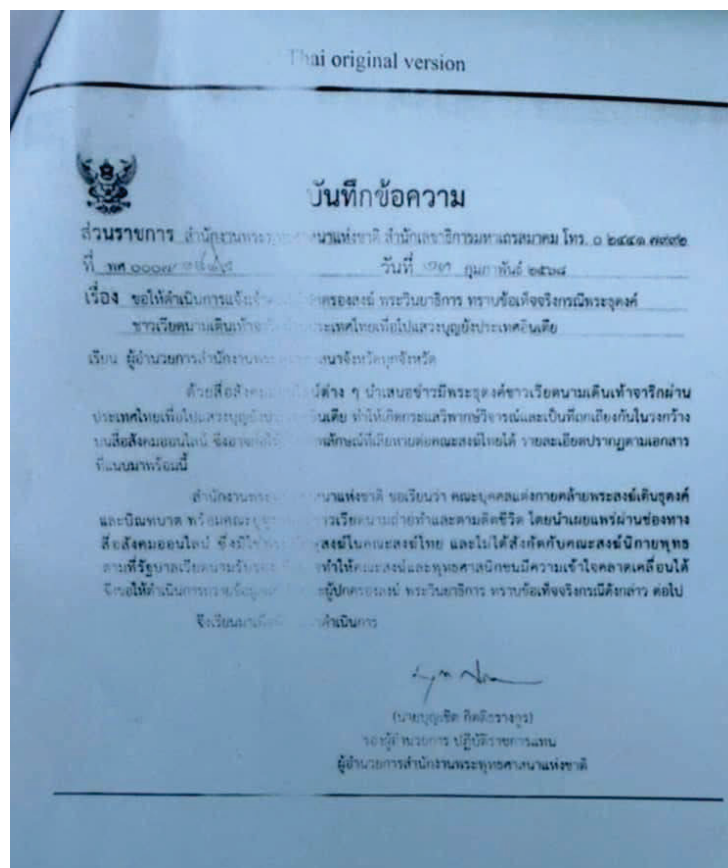
With metta (note by authors of this report: Sri Lankan word for “Buddhist loving kindness”).

Signed, sealed

Most Ven. Dr. Thich Nhat Tu

(Chairman)

The translation of the warning in the Thai language sent to the regional offices by the National Office of Buddhism of Thailand is below:



Translation from Thai:

MEMORANDUM

Government Department, Office of the Sangha Supreme Council, National Office of the Secretary of the Sangha Supreme Council, Tel. 0 2541.3992

Reference Number: 0001/2554, Date: 13 February B.E. 2567 (2025)

Subject: Request to inform the Director of the Vinaya Council and the disciplinary committee of the facts in the case of a Vietnamese wandering monk who walked through Thailand to seek pilgrimage in India

To: Directors of Provincial Buddhist Offices Nationwide

Various online communities have reported news of Vietnamese Buddhist monks traveling on foot, making a pilgrimage through Thailand on their way to travel to India for study visits and religious activities, which has caused criticism and debate in the online community that may be damaging to the Thai Vinaya Council. The details are in the attached document.

The National Office of Buddhism informs you that this group of individuals who dress similarly to the traveling monks, who receive alms of merit-making, and who attract a following in their way of life through broadcasting to online communities of the Thai Sangha, are not endorsed by the Thai Sangha and that they do not observe the regulations for Buddhist monks as the Vietnamese government prescribes. This has the potential to cause a misunderstanding to the Thai Sangha and Thai Buddhists in general. Therefore, this is to inform the Director of The Vinaya Council of the matter.

Informing so that action can be taken on the matter,

(Mr. Boonchit Kittirangkorn)

Deputy Director

Acting Director of the National Office of Buddhism

Minh Tue addressed the false accusations sent by VBS Senior Monk Thich Nhat Tu, he said in the video online⁶. The key points from the video are:

Although he adopted the Buddhist religious name “Minh Tue” (Clear Mind) to let others know that he is learning and practicing Buddhism, and help others to identify him versus others, he did not adopt the first name of this type of Buddhist name which is “Thich” (Vietnamization of “Sak” in “Sakya Muni”) because he feels that he is not yet qualified. He added that if he came across a Buddhist temple whose monks can help him learn and practice good Buddhism as a monastic, he may think about it, but he is currently not prepared enough to take monastic vows

⁶ Trục Tiếp Sư Minh Tuệ Lên tiếng Trả Lời Lại Bức thư TỔ Đoàn tu giả
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSbCDUcB_-c

to become a monk. He has never claimed to be an ordained Buddhist monk. Currently he tries to live according to seven Buddhist practices, including some out of the eight standard Buddhist precepts and some out of the 13 Buddhist dhutangas (ascetic practices). The seven practices he is trying to maintain currently are: no lying, no sexual activity, no alcohol, no stealing from others, eating one vegan meal of alms food a day before noon, no handling of money (including refusing monetary gifts), and wearing only patched-up robes.

Contrary to VBS accusations, his robe, made of dozens of patches from salvaged cloth pieces to reflect humility, is not the style of robes worn by VBS monks which are made from whole saffron or some other Buddhist color cloth, not patched-up, humble robes.

He had already claimed to be a simple Buddhist trying to live according to a limited number of Buddhist practices. He has no intent of establishing a dissenting Buddhist sect. Therefore VBS should not have accused him of breaking VBS religious rules or Vietnamese laws.

If a foreign country forbids him and his group from walking and begging for food, the group would not disobey the government's edict. Why did VBS accuse him of trying to disrupt public order or sow divisions among the Sangha?

He refuted the VBS accusation that he compromised Buddhist virtues and the Law on beliefs. He declared that he had no idea what VBS meant and could only name what virtues and beliefs he himself tried to adopt: no killing; no misappropriation of others' possessions; no sexual misconduct, including avoiding sexual relationships; no lying; no alcohol; one vegan meal a day before noon; and no handling or begging for money. He could not understand why such practices would compromise Buddhist virtues or Vietnam's Law on (Religion or) Beliefs.

Regarding VBS mentioning that the Thai Buddhist Church does not recognize him as a monk: He does not seek such recognition. He only wants to reach India, the birthplace of Buddhism, to show gratitude. If those who willingly followed him decided to join his walk, it is up to them. He never urged anyone to join him. He refuted the VBS accusation of trying to form an ascetic sect, he never claimed to have achieved asceticism because he is still trying to see if he can succeed at following the seven practices or not. He denied that by trying to follow the seven practices, he was harming national unity (because he could not understand their reasoning). He refuted their accusation that his walk affected the reputation and unity of VBS. He said that he had nothing to do with VBS internal affairs and had no defence against such an accusation (meaning no real reason was stated for him to be able to refute). He refuted the "harming national security" accusation and "foreigners using your walk to smear VBS and the Vietnamese government" accusation. If his group had accepted donated food or train or bus tickets from foreigners, how could this have smeared VBS or the Vietnamese State, for his group had not said anything negative about the VBS and Vietnamese government in any country they had traveled.

Regarding the VBS wording about Indonesia and some other countries having forbidden his group from traveling on foot, he subtly hinted that in some countries, the authorities were

initially kind and only started to restrict his group after VBS issued the accusations. He also said that when such restrictions were imposed, the group used public transport to comply.

Section II. OTHER FREEDOM OF RELIGION ISSUES INVOLVING VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA AND THE GOVERNMENT

1. The case of Abbott Thích Minh Nguyen, who got banned from his temple

The Vietnamese government continues to deny freedom of religion to congregations whose temples are outside of VBS control. For example, in June 2024, Abbot Thich Minh Nguyen wrote to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and US Department of State:⁷

“My religious name is Thich Minh Nguyen, the abbot of Phuoc Son Buddhist Temple in Modesto, CA since April 2012. I have been a naturalized US citizen since 2015. I am the legitimate abbot of Quang Duc Pagoda in Hue City, Vietnam, a temple built nearly 280 years ago. It has special cultural and historic value. In 1747, Lord Nguyễn Phúc Khoát, whose descendant later founded the last Dynasty of Vietnam, recognized this pagoda with a scroll bearing his own handwriting and personal seal.

The Buddhist community of Quang Duc Pagoda has chosen me to be the abbot, but I cannot carry out my duty because of the many hardships caused by the government. They want me to join the government’s Buddhist Church, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. In 2006, when I started to serve as the abbot of Quang Duc Pagoda, two public security officers told me that the government opposed my being the abbot because my master and I did not join the government’s organization.

They forbade our pagoda from hosting religious activities and from any renovation work. I decided to close the pagoda so that the government can’t find any pretext to seize it. Then, I migrated to the United States in March 2007.

For the past 17 years, I returned to Vietnam every year to take care of my pagoda. Last year, I also went back to Vietnam to take care of it. The local government told me that I could not be its abbot because the government’s Buddhist organization already picked an abbot that the government approved.

To this day, Buddhist members of the pagoda continue to shun that government-approved abbot. Moreover, he cannot be the abbot because Quang Duc Pagoda has never been offered to the government’s Buddhist Church.

In 2019, the government thwarted my attempt to rebuild a wooden structure and the wooden front gate of the pagoda that sorely needed repair. After many years without

⁷ This was also reported in the USCIRF report at <https://www.uscifr.gov/publications/state-controlled-religion-and-religious-freedom-vietnam>

repair, this pagoda with historical significance and of both cultural and religious value is now in desolation.

I ask for your support and assistance so that our Buddhist community may reopen Quang Duc Pagoda for next year's Buddha's Birthday celebration (May 5, 2025). I would like to invite US embassy and consulate staff and officials as well as US diplomats and USCIRF commissioners to join us at this event on that day. Thank you for your attention."

2. VBS attacked the High Venerable Thich Minh Dao for his support of the Dutanga monk

We would like to show you how the government and VBS work together to attack victims, including a monk who chose to leave VBS. High Venerable Thich Minh Dao, while leading his temple under VBS, raised his voice to support Minh Tue. VBS (by itself or in secret consultation with Vietnam's government) created difficulties for Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue and those who joined him during his long trek. High Ven. Thich Minh Dao aired his support for Minh Tue and was reprimanded by VBS. The harassment of Thich Minh Dao is reported below from public sources available in 2024.⁸



Photo: Minh Dao Monastery of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha

"The fact that the government of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province will conduct an inspection of the child care operation at Minh Dao Monastery after the abbot announced his return to secular life has reminded some people of the case of the Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe.

8

<https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/news/vietnamnews/people-upset-after-local-government-plans-inspecting-minh-dao-monastery-08292024055637.html>

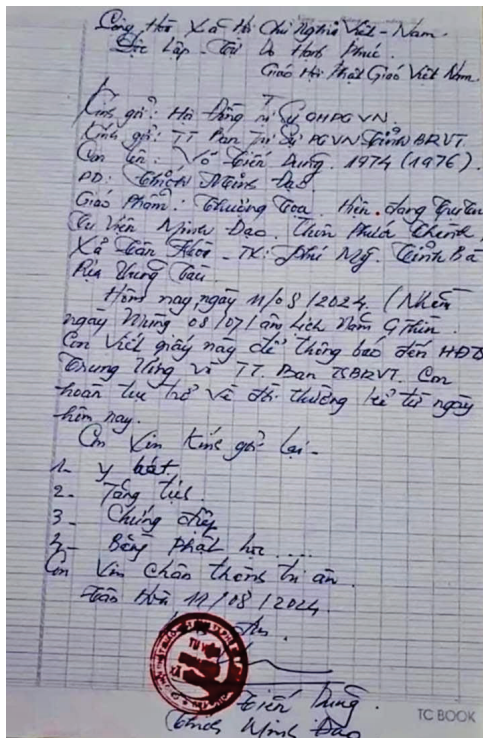
Monk Minh Dao and his orphanage recently became famous after he was disciplined and forced to kneel in repentance for giving a lecture expressing admiration for the path of practicing according to the 13 ascetic practices of Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue.

He subsequently sent a document to the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province asking to be allowed to return to secular life but still wear the same “home made from scraps of cloth” robe as Minh Tue and continue to raise orphans.

Cong Thuong (Industry & Commerce) Newspaper reported on 28 August (2024) that the VBS Executive Committee of Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province sent a document to the People's Committee of Phu My Town; the Bureau of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs of the province requesting an examination of the legality of raising children at Minh Dao Monastery.

The (official) reason is that Monk Thich Minh Dao (legal name Vo Tien Dung) announced his return to secular life on 11 August (2024), so he no longer has the function of managing and conducting the activities of Minh Dao Monastery, including nurturing children residing here.”

The RFA article noted that Thich Minh Dao used his own money to buy land and build the monastery while he was with VBS and had no problem raising orphans here.



Resignation letter on 11 August 2024 from Monk Thich Minh Dao to VBS, mentioning he was returning his monk's religious implements and papers.

3. VBS targeted Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe - Victims of Religious Freedom Persecution:

This report highlights the severe detrimental impacts on 30 members of Thien Am after they refused to join the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS). Thien Am was also subjected to defamatory attacks by the local government, influential members of the VBS, state media, and YouTubers.

Defamatory and false accusation by the VBS: Thien Am Zen Monastery - Hòa Khánh Tây Commune, Đức Hòa District, Long An Province. Two VBS monks were directly responsible for the imprisonment of a Buddhist group and its 92-year-old leader, the deprivation of caregivers for several child monks (orphans raised by the group whose members were unjustly imprisoned), and the prosecution of three attorneys who defended the victims in court. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has sent a letter to Vietnam's Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Ministry of Public Security (MPS) urging a halt to the continued harassment and criminal investigations of these human rights lawyers for allegedly "abusing democratic freedoms" under article 331 of Vietnam's Penal Code.⁹

The victims live almost like monks who reside in Thien Am Zen Monastery (Thien Am for short). In Vietnam, some Buddhists don't want to become monastics in a full-fledged Buddhist temple (pagoda). Instead, they shave their heads and live like Buddhist monks in a privately owned facility typically named Zen centre, meditation centre, and the like. Since the leader or owner of such a centre doesn't declare himself to be an abbot of a temple or abbey, his non-temple property is not associated with independent Buddhist churches such as the banned UBCV. The Vietnamese government persecuted independent abbots and their temple congregations to force them to join the State-controlled VBS. The Zen Centre is one of these informal "monasteries". It is also a private orphanage because it raises several orphaned children, gives them a Buddhist education, and trains them to be "non-temple" monastics starting at a very young age.

The centre encourages the orphans/monks it raises to excel in performing arts. Several of them won prizes at competitions. High Ven. Thích Nhật Từ of VBS used to admire the talent in performing arts of the young orphans raised as "non-temple" monks at this Zen Centre. He tried to persuade the group to formally join his government-controlled church, but they did not do so. So, he started to falsely accuse them of various acts of misconduct, requesting the police to investigate and punish centre members. Later, the leader of VBS of Long An Province - High Ven. Thích Minh Thiện - joined the former monk in falsely condemning Thien Am and requesting the police to investigate "crimes". Since all news media are controlled in Vietnam by the communist government, the news media became an accomplice to this scheme by the government-controlled Buddhist church.

⁹

<https://www.icj.org/vietnam-halt-spurious-criminal-investigations-against-human-rights-lawyers-dang-dinh-manh-and-nguyen-van-mieng/>

The inhumane punishment occurred after this unregistered Buddhist group refused to join the government-controlled Buddhist Church. The founder and his disciples cared for orphans whom they raised as child monks and child nuns.

On January 04, 2022, hundreds of police officers raided the monastery without a search warrant. The police seized all the computers, personal belongings, birth certificates, other identification papers, deeds, and the life savings of the monastery that they earned by their hard labor and talents in the form of cash and 210 taels of gold (pure gold costs around 2600 USD per tael and a tael is 1.33 ounce).

The police provided no legal documents or receipts for the gold and cash value. Thien Am filed a complaint with the Ministry of Public Security in Hanoi. Later, local police came to threaten Master Le Tung Van and his family's safety if Master Le continued the claim. Master Le kept this matter private to protect his family.

On 20 July 2022, the lower court of Long An Province sentenced five non-temple, Buddhist monastics and a female adherent to a total of over 23 years in prison for what ought to have been a civil case, but the court ruled that the victims had committed the crime of abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the State's interest (a vague, indefensible charge from the 2015 Criminal Code). The monastics are not Buddhist monks living in a Buddhist temple because their monasticism is something between the traditional Buddhist temple life and "home" monasticism.

During the investigation phase, police examined allegations that centre members engaged in incest after a local television station broadcast a documentary claiming the children at the temple were not orphans but were actually living with their nun birth mothers at the centre compound. Members of the Zen Centre reported that police forcibly took DNA samples of adults and minors within the community three times without their consent. The members denied the incest claims, saying the nuns were not biologically related to the children, but that they adopted the children to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates so the children could attend school. By year's end, police were unable to confirm the reports of incest, despite a lengthy investigation and the multiple forced DNA tests. One nun reported that local commune police forced her to undergo a gynecological exam by a male doctor at a local hospital.

At 7 am of 24 September 2022, some 100 police officers, at the order of the Police Department of Long An Province, raided the residence of Thiền Am Bên Bờ Vũ Trụ (TABBVT). About half of them entered the facility while the rest mounted guard along the dirt road leading to it. They proceeded to cut off wifi; however, one TABBVT member managed to call one of the pro bono lawyers representing this Buddhist group before her phone went dead.

The police rounded all TABBVT members to one area and forced them, one by one, to undergo the DNA sample collection procedure, which was conducted by the police as no medical personnel was present. While other victims looked on, each sect member was in

turn dragged by five or six police officers, who restrained each victim for others to pick her/his hair samples and squeezed her/his mouth while others swabbed for mucosa samples. Some victims suffered bruises to their wrists and/or arms.

Mrs. Lê Thu Vân, 65 and suffering terminal cancer, was dragged from her bed and forced to undergo the same procedure. Terrified, many of the child monks hid in different places. The police searched for them and dragged them out to join the adults. Despite their screaming in protest, the police squeezed their mouths for mucosa samples and forced them to sit still for the collection of their hair samples.

Instigation by a monk of the government-controlled Buddhist Church and police conspiracy aimed to destroy this independent Buddhist group by accusing the orphans of being fathered by the founder through incestuous relationships, appropriation of others' property through fraud, and Vietnam Penal Code 331- Abusing Democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interest of the State. The key members are sentenced to 23 years and six months in prison.

The Vietnamese government announced in April 2025 further prosecution and trials of two already imprisoned members of the Buddhist group known as the Zen Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe.¹⁰ Approximately 30 group members, including the 92-year old founder, adult monastics, child monastics, and lay followers are persecuted based on false accusations by VBS Monk Thich Nhat Tu and another VBS monk. Six adults received prison sentences. Ten child monks and nuns lost their mentors and are being taken care of by those still free, but the police monitor their residence and enter anytime they want to. This resulted in trauma for the victims.

A report from NGOs was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022¹¹ and this committee issued its concluding observations.¹²

On 8 May 2025, trials are set to further punish the founder, Le Tung Van (his age and frail health led the government to allow him to be placed under house arrest instead of incarceration), and Le Thanh Nhat Nguyen. Please note that three out of the five or six attorneys defending the victims had to escape from Vietnam in 2023¹³ (another escaped in 2024) because the government started to investigate them in preparation for unlawful trials to punish them.¹⁴ On 21 May 2024, the

¹⁰ Joint Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Vietnam by Boat People SOS, Advocates for Faith and Justice, et al. for 46th Session of the UN Universal Periodic Review. Also at <https://www.uscirf.gov/publications/state-controlled-religion-and-religious-freedom-vietnam>

¹¹ <https://dvov.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/BPSOS-UNCRC-report-on-TABTVT-for-public-release.pdf>

¹² <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/document/8931c140-a935-416b-846c-5d474c30b47b>

¹³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/vietnam/>

¹⁴

<https://www.lawyersforlawyers.org/vietnamese-lawyers-dang-dinh-manh-dao-kim-lan-and-nguyen-van-mieng-forced-to-flee-their-country/>

People's Court of Duc Hoa District (Long An Province) sentenced 93-year-old Le Tung Van to three years in prison for the crime of incest, total sentence now 8 years.¹⁵

Section III. Discrimination against Khmer Krom - Vietnam Targeting Khmer Krom Buddhists And Temples

In November 2024, Vietnam sentenced several Khmer Krom monks and Buddhists to two to six years of imprisonment as follows: Ven. Thach Chanh Da Ra: 6 years; Duong Khai: 5 years, 9 months; Mr. Kim Khiem: 3 years; Mr. Thach Nha: 2 years, 6 months; Ven. Thach Quy Lay, Kim Sa Ruong, Thach Chop, Mr. Thach Ve Sanal, and Mr. Kim Khu: 2 years imprisonment each.¹⁶



The scene in the temple when the Executive Committee of the VBS in Vinh Long province announced the decision to expel monk Thach Chanh Da Ra.

Expulsion from the VBS: Monk Thach Chanh Da Ra first was expelled from the VBS on December 3, 2023 even though he did not register with VBS; they accused him of being “uncooperative”, defaming local authorities, and dividing national unity in the incident of November 22, 2023. Later, he was arrested along with Mr. Kim Khiem by Vinh Long provincial police on March 26, 2024 for “abusing the rights to freedom and democracy” per Article 331 of Vietnam Criminal Laws. Another Khmer Krom Buddhist, Thach Ve Sandal, was also arrested on the same day for “illegally arrest and detain a person” per Article 157 as he helped protect Dai Tho Temple. According to Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation, on that day in November a task force from Tam Binh District People's Committee of more than 50 people arrived at the temple and intended to attack Buddhists and monks of the temple. In protecting them, Abbot Thach did not allow task force members to enter the temple, in the altercation 3 monks were

¹⁵ Le Tung Van sentenced to 3 years for incest, total sentence now 8 years
<https://vietnamnet.vn/en/le-tung-van-sentenced-to-3-years-for-incest-total-sentence-now-8-years-2403572.html>

¹⁶

<https://khmerkrom.org/condemnation-of-unjust-sentencing-of-khmer-krom-buddhist-monks-and-activists-by-vietnamese-court/>

injured. In protest of his expulsion, a sit-in at the temple was conducted by Khmer Krom villagers to defend Thach from being removed. Giac Ngo Online of VBS accused him of violating Buddhist Law and the charter of VBS, as well as propaganda against the state. The inserted picture displayed a meeting of VBS provincial Board of Administration on Dec.3,2023 where the decision to expel abbot Thach from VBS.¹⁷

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) announced in December 2024 that it is alarmed by the Vietnamese government's escalating crackdown on independent religious communities—including Khmer Krom Buddhists, Montagnard Protestants, Cao Dai followers, and many others.

“USCIRF condemns the Vietnamese government’s recent targeting of independent religious communities,” stated USCIRF Chair Stephen Schneck. “Authorities sentenced five Khmer Krom Buddhist monks to prison terms between two and six years, disrupted independent Cao Dai followers’ worship and funeral services, and continued to force Montagnard Protestants in the central highlands to denounce their faith. This behavior is inconsistent with Vietnam’s position as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, and we are closely monitoring these disturbing developments with grave concern.”

Vietnamese law imposes restrictive requirements on religious activities that are unevenly applied throughout the country. Moreover, in recent years, USCIRF has observed significant backsliding on religious freedom in Vietnam, as the government has increasingly repressed independent religious groups, including those it considers “strange, false, or heretical religions” that refuse to comply with state control.

“In light of this deterioration, the U.S. government should enhance its efforts to press the Vietnamese government to release religious prisoners and make concrete improvements to religious freedom conditions, including by amending the 2018 Law on Belief and Religion and the implementing decree,” added USCIRF Commissioner Meir Soloveichik. “We also urge the State Department to designate Vietnam as a ‘country of particular concern’, or CPC, under the International Religious Freedom Act, as USCIRF recommended in our 2024 annual report.”¹⁸

An article from The Vietnamese newspaper also highlights the case:¹⁹

An appellate court in Tra Vinh Province on May 23 (2024) rejected the appeals of Thach Cuong, 37, and To Hoang Chuong, 38, two activists who have campaigned for the rights to freedom of religion of the indigenous Khmer Krom population living in the southwestern part of Vietnam.

¹⁷ Source: RFA on Dec. 6, 2023 and VOA on March 28, 2024.

¹⁸ <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-alarmed-over-escalating-crackdown-vietnam>

¹⁹ <https://www.thevietnamese.org/2024/05/tra-vinh-court-rejects-appeals-of-two-khmer-krom-religious-activists/>

In a first-instance trial on March 20, Cuong was sentenced to four years, and Chuong received three years and six months in prison. Both were charged with violating Article 331 of the Penal Code, which forbids “abusing democratic freedom to infringe on the state and other individuals' interests.”

The People’s Police Newspaper, a mouthpiece of the Ministry of Public Security, reported that Thach Cuong was arrested because he “had regular interactions with overseas reactionary organizations and individuals through social networking platforms from 2021 until he was detained on July 31, 2023.”

At the same time, it added, Cuong had “posted, live streamed, and published 14 videos that reflect false facts and affect national and religious solidarity in Vietnam.” Meanwhile, Chuong was accused of sharing the information published by Thach Cuong and several foreign websites that “distorted” the religious situation in Vietnam.

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Thach Cuong and To Hoang Chuong became targets of the government’s persecution because of their advocacy for the Khmer Krom religious adherents to practice their religion and beliefs without state interference. The USCIRF noted that the police had temporarily detained and assaulted Chuong when he visited another Khmer Krom activist in Soc Trang Province in June 2023.

Independent, Khmer Krom, and UBCV Buddhist temples, although few in number, are the very last bastions for Vietnamese Buddhists who want some religious freedom because VBS is a tool of the Communist Party. In fact, a VBS monk was honored for his 50-year party membership.²⁰

²⁰ <https://www.voatiengviet.com/a/viet-nam-lo-tin-mot-hoa-thuong-co-50-nam-tuoi-dang/4301884.html>

Appendix 1.

Shown below are English translations of a number of 2024 official government documents about the long walks by Buddhist Minh Tue, a mendicant practitioner of Buddhism, to give the reader a feel for the views of VBS and the Vietnamese government on this issue and hopefully better understand the 2025 events involving VBS defaming Minh Tue and his group when these victims want to practice the mendicant tradition in other Southeast Asian countries. It is unlikely that VBS would have sent letters to Southeast Asian Buddhist leaders without having the approval of the Vietnamese government.

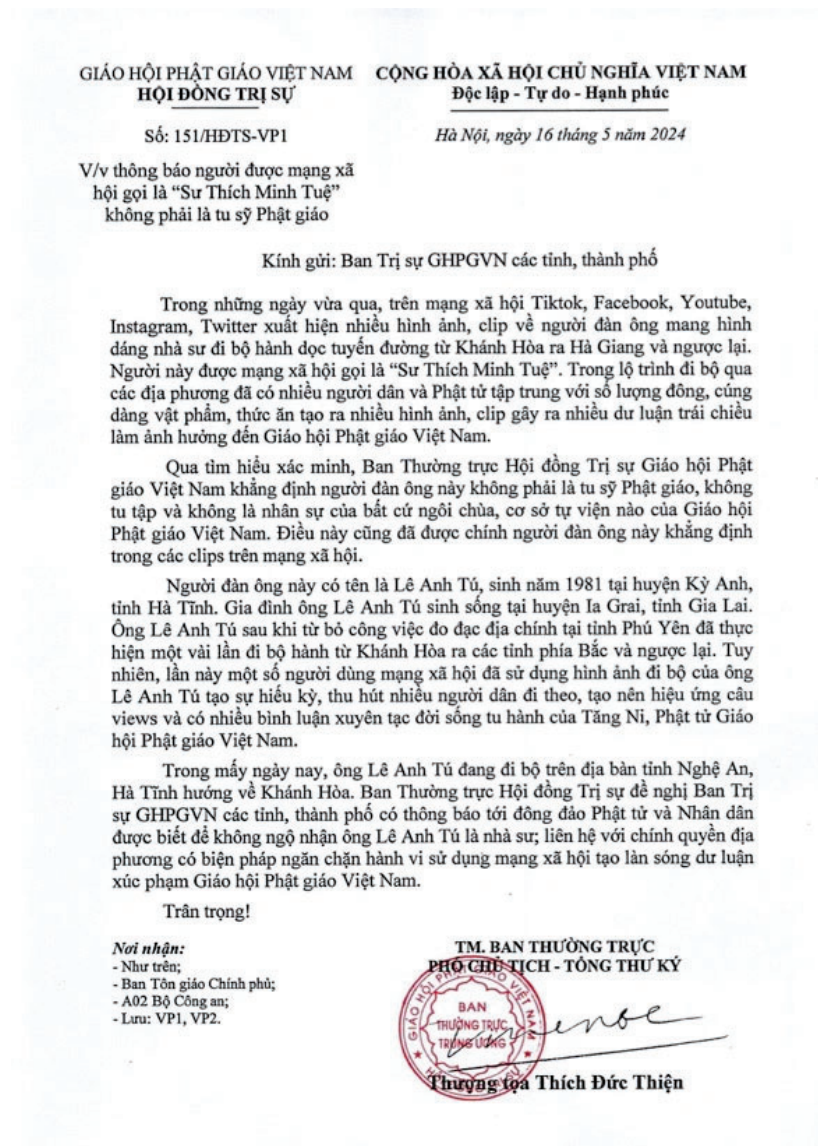


Image of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha’s statement regarding Mr. Minh Tue

Translation of VBS statement about Monk Minh Tue

**VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA
GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Liberty - Happiness**

No.: 151/HĐTS-VP1
Hanoi, 16 May 2024

Re: notification that the person whom the
social media call “Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue”
is not a Buddhist monk

To: Provincial and City Governing Committees of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha

In the past few days, different media platforms like Tiktok, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter display many pictures, video clips about a man with the appearance of a monk walking along the roads from Khanh Hoa to Ha Giang then back. This person is called “Alms Begging Buddhist Minh Tue” on social media. Throughout many places that he passed by, many people and Buddhists gathered in great numbers, offered gifts, food, and even money, resulting in pictures and video clips which gave rise to many negative rumors affecting the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS).

After some investigation, the Standing Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha’s Governing Council confirms that this man is not a Buddhist monk, he does not practice Buddhism, and is not a member of any Buddhist temple or monastery of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. This fact is also confirmed by himself on social media.

This man has the secular name Tú Anh Lê and was born in 1981 in Kỳ Anh District, Hà Tĩnh Province. Mr. Tú Anh Lê’s family lives in Eakar District, Đắk Lắk Province. Mr. Tú Anh Lê left his job pertaining to land surveying in Phú Yên Province to conduct his long walk a few times from Khánh Hòa to different northern provinces then back. However, this time many bloggers use the images of Mr. Tú Anh Lê walking to provoke people’s curiosity and attract people to follow him, to get more views and there are many comments misrepresenting the religious practice of the monks, nuns, and Buddhists of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

These days, Mr. Tú Anh Lê is walking around Nghệ An Province and Hà Tĩnh Province toward Khánh Hòa. The Standing Committee of VBS’s Governing Council suggests that the Governing Committees of VBS of cities and provinces notify Buddhists and other lay persons to not mistakenly believe that Mr. Tú Anh Lê is a monk; to reach out to the

local governments for measures to stop all uses of social media in creating rumors offending the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

Respectfully,

***Recipients:* For THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

- As above; **VICE CHAIR –**
GENERAL SECRETARY
- Government Religious Affairs Committee;
- A02 Ministry of Public Security;Files: VP1, VP2. (signed and sealed)
Most Venerable Thích Đức Thi

**BỘ NỘI VỤ
BAN TÔN GIÁO CHÍNH PHỦ**

**CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc**

Số: 795 /TGCP-PG

Hà Nội, ngày 16 tháng 5 năm 2024

V/v công tác quản lý nhà nước
liên quan đến của Phật giáo trên địa bàn

Kính gửi:

- Ban/Phòng Tôn giáo (Sở Nội vụ) các tỉnh, thành phố trực thuộc Trung ương;
- Ban Dân tộc - Tôn giáo tỉnh Bạc Liêu.

Những ngày gần đây trên các trang mạng xã hội phát tán, lan truyền nhiều hình ảnh về một người tự xưng là Thích Minh Tuệ, trang phục mang hình thức như tu sĩ Phật giáo, đi bộ từ Nam ra Bắc, rồi từ Bắc vào Nam, thu hút sự quan tâm của dư luận xã hội. Về việc này, Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ thông tin như sau:

Qua nắm tình hình bước đầu, ông Thích Minh Tuệ tên thật là Lê Anh Tú, sinh năm 1981 tại xã Kỳ Vãn, huyện Kỳ Anh, tỉnh Hà Tĩnh. Ông Thích Minh Tuệ không phải là tu sĩ Phật giáo thuộc Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam. Trước đây ông Thích Minh Tuệ đã ba lần đi bộ theo hình thức thực hành phương pháp tu tập “hạnh đầu đả” từ miền Nam ra miền Bắc và ngược lại nhưng không thu hút sự quan tâm của nhiều người. Tuy nhiên, lần thứ tư này hành trình của ông Minh Tuệ đã thu hút sự quan tâm của đông đảo người dân, có thời điểm lên tới hàng trăm người đi theo làm ảnh hưởng an ninh trật tự và giao thông trên các địa bàn. Trong đoàn đi theo có tín đồ Phật tử, có những người hiểu kỳ và nhóm tiktok, youtuber quay clip, livestream đăng tải trên các trang mạng xã hội tạo nên “hiện tượng Thích Minh Tuệ”, thu hút sự quan tâm của dư luận và có nhiều bình luận theo các chiều hướng khác nhau.

Từ thực tế đó, Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ đề nghị Ban/Phòng Tôn giáo (Sở Nội vụ) các tỉnh/thành phố trực thuộc Trung ương quan tâm, thực hiện:

- Tham mưu Sở Nội vụ báo cáo Ủy ban nhân dân tỉnh/thành phố chỉ đạo các sở, ngành chức năng quan tâm, khi ông Minh Tuệ tới địa bàn không để xảy ra tình trạng tập trung đông người, gây cản trở và ảnh hưởng an toàn giao thông, gây phức tạp về an ninh trật tự, đặc biệt không để các thể lực xấu, lợi dụng, xúi giục, lôi kéo gây mất đoàn kết tôn giáo và vi phạm pháp luật.

- Trao đổi với Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam ở địa phương hướng dẫn tăng ni, Phật tử tu học theo đúng chính pháp của Đức Phật, tôn trọng quyền tự do tín ngưỡng, tôn giáo và cách thức hành trì của mọi người nhưng cần đảm bảo thực hiện theo đúng quy định của pháp luật.

- Thông tin, tuyên truyền để quần chúng nhân dân, tăng ni, phật tử và nhân dân hiểu về chính sách tôn trọng tự do tín ngưỡng, tôn giáo, về cách thức hành trì của Phật giáo; không cản trở, làm ảnh hưởng việc tu học đúng chính pháp; vận động chức sắc, tín đồ và quần chúng nhân dân không tập trung đông người nơi công cộng, gây cản trở, ách tắc giao thông và an ninh trật tự trên địa bàn. Chủ động cung cấp thông tin, định hướng dư luận, không để các đối tượng thiếu thiện chí có cơ hội lợi dụng tuyên truyền, kích động gây mất ổn định xã hội.

Đề nghị các Ban/Phòng Tôn giáo (Sở Nội vụ) các tỉnh/thành phố, Ban Dân tộc - Tôn giáo tỉnh Bạc Liêu khẩn trương triển khai công việc. Quá trình thực hiện nếu có vấn đề phức tạp phát sinh, đề nghị kịp thời báo cáo lãnh đạo địa phương và Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ để thống nhất hướng dẫn, giải quyết./. *ĐTH*

Nơi nhận:

- Như trên;
- Thứ trưởng Vũ Chiến Thắng (để b/c);
- Trưởng ban Vũ Hoài Bắc (để b/c);
- Phó Trưởng ban Trần Thị Minh Nga;
- Sở Nội vụ các tỉnh, thành phố trực thuộc TW;
- Lưu: VT, PG. *bcs*

**KT. TRƯỞNG BAN
PHÓ TRƯỞNG BAN**



Trần Thị Minh Nga

Translation of MOHA statement about Monk Minh Tue

Ministry of Home Affairs

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Government Religious Affairs Committee Independence- Liberty – Happiness

No.: 795/TGCP-PG

Hanoi, 16 May 2024

Ref: Government Management of

Matters related to Buddhism

To: - Committees/Offices of Religious Affairs (Home Affairs Division) of provinces, and cities

directly under the Central Government;

Committee on Ethnicities - Religion of Bạc Liêu Province.

Social websites in recent days disseminated the pictures of a man self identified as Minh Tue, who wears a robe with the appearance of Buddhist monk, walking from southern Vietnam to northern Vietnam and making the return trip, who attracted the interest of social media, the Government Religious Affairs Committee inform this matter as follows:

Preliminary assessment indicated that Mr. Minh Tue's name at birth is Lê Anh Tú, born in 1981 in Kỳ Văn Commune, Kỳ Anh District, Hà Tĩnh Province. He is not a Buddhist monk under the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. Previously, he has trekked three times from southern Vietnam to northern Vietnam and vice versa in practicing the ascetic Dhutanga virtue; but his practice did not attract people's interest. However, his fourth trip attracted public interest, at times hundreds of people following his path, which affected security, social order and traffic flow in several localities. The followers included Buddhists, curious folks, tiktokers, youtubers, who recorded on videos and live streamed the activities on social websites, which created "the Minh Tue phenomenon", and attracted public interest with comments reflecting different viewpoints.

Based on that fact, the Government Religious Affairs Committee suggests that Committees/ Offices of Religious Affairs (Home Affairs Division) of the provinces and cities directly under Central Government focus in implementing the following:

- Consult with the Home Affairs Division report to People's Committee of province/ city to direct all divisions, related branches pay attention when Mr. Minh Tue comes to the local area and that would not create an assembly of

numerous people which may cause congestion and insecure circulation of traffic, cause complicated social disorder, especially do not allow hostile forces taking advantage of the situation to incite the crowd, causing disunity of religions and infringing the laws.

- Communicate with the local Vietnam Buddhist Sangha to guide monks, nuns and Buddhists in accordance with the original Dharma of Buddhism, respect freedom of belief and religion and the practices of the followers, and be certain that their activities will not be against the law.
- Inform, propagate the public, monks and nuns, and Buddhists to help them to understand the policy of respecting freedom of belief and religion, and practices of Buddhism; does not obstruct the learning and practice in accordance with original Buddhist Dharma; advocate the clerics, Buddhists and citizens to not get involved in large gatherings of people in public places, which may cause traffic congestion, security problem and social disorder in the areas. Actively provide information, orient public opinion, don't let those lacking in goodwill have an opportunity to propagate, incite the public causing social disorder.

Suggest that Committees, Offices of Religious Affairs (Home Affairs Division) of provinces and cities, Committee of Ethnicities - Religion of Bạc Liêu Province urgently develop a plan of action. In the process of implementation of the plan, if some complication occurred, please report in a timely manner to the local leaders and the Government Religious Affairs Committee for them to resolve the issues.

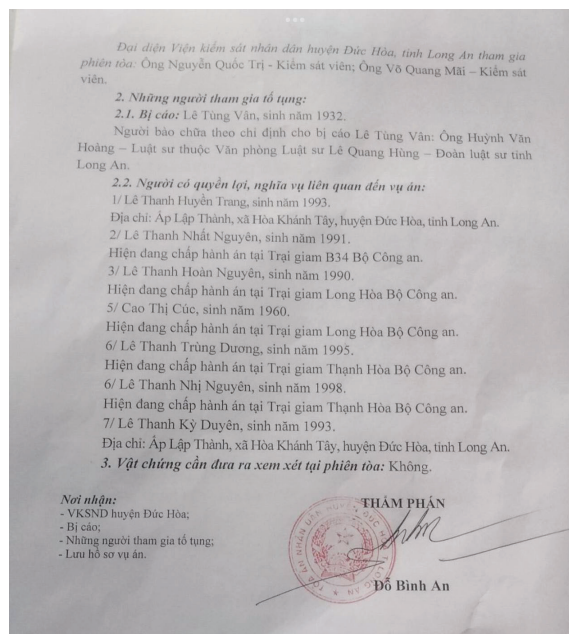
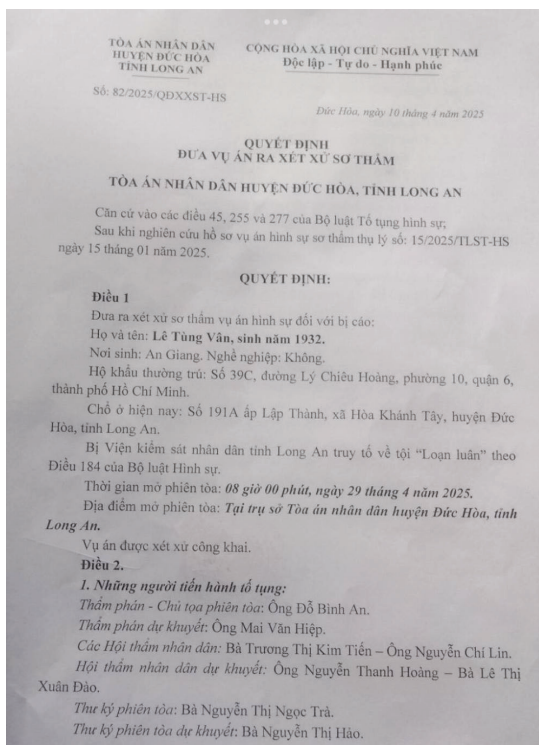
Recipients

For the Committee Chair

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As above - Vice Minister: Vũ Chiến Thắng (for reporting) - Committee Chair: Vũ Hoài Bắc (for reporting) - Deputy Committee Chair: Trần Thị Minh Nga - Home Affairs Divisions of provinces and cities - Files: VT, PG | <p>Vice Chair</p>

<p>Trần Thị Minh Nga (signed & sealed)</p> |
|---|--|

Appendix 2. Announcement of May 2025 Trials of Two Currently Imprisoned Victims from the Meditation Centre at the Edge of the Universe (Thien Am).



Court Decision to Try Founder Le Tung Van (92-year-old founder already sentenced to imprisonment) for another “crime” (made up by the Government) in May 2025.

PEOPLE’S COURT

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

ĐỨC HÒA DISTRICT

Independence-Liberty-Happiness

TỈNH LONG AN

No.: 82/2025/QDXXST-HS

Đức Hòa, 10 April 2025

DECISION:

TRY THE CASE IN THE COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE

Pursuant to Articles 45, 255 and 277 of the Criminal Procedure Code; After studying the case file of the first instance criminal case No. 15/2025/TLST-HS dated January 15, 2025

HEREBY DECIDE:

Decision No. 1.

Bring the case to a criminal trial against the defendant:

Full name: **Lê Tùng Vân, born in 1932...**

Trial start time: **08:00, 29 April 2025.**

Trial venue: **Đức Hòa District Courthouse, Long An Province...**

3. Evidence to be considered at trial: None.

Recipients:

- Procuracy of Đức Hòa District;

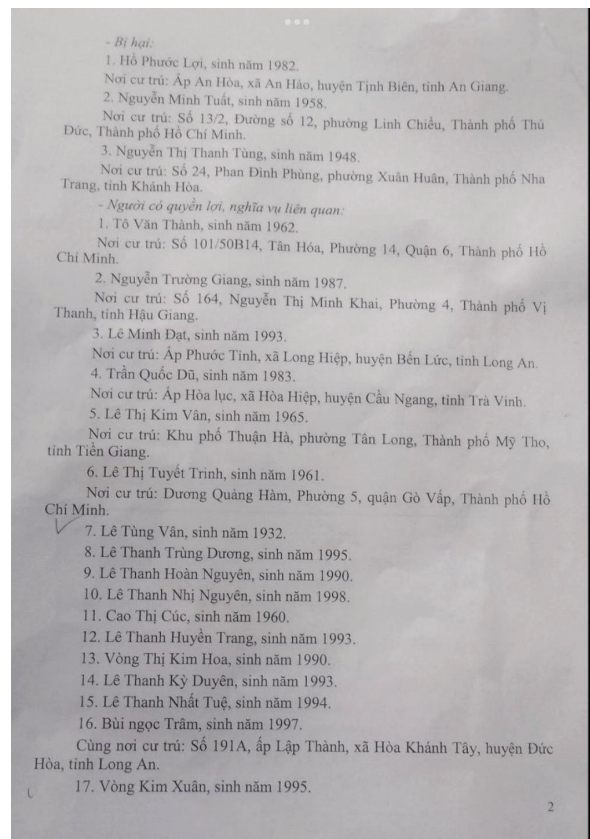
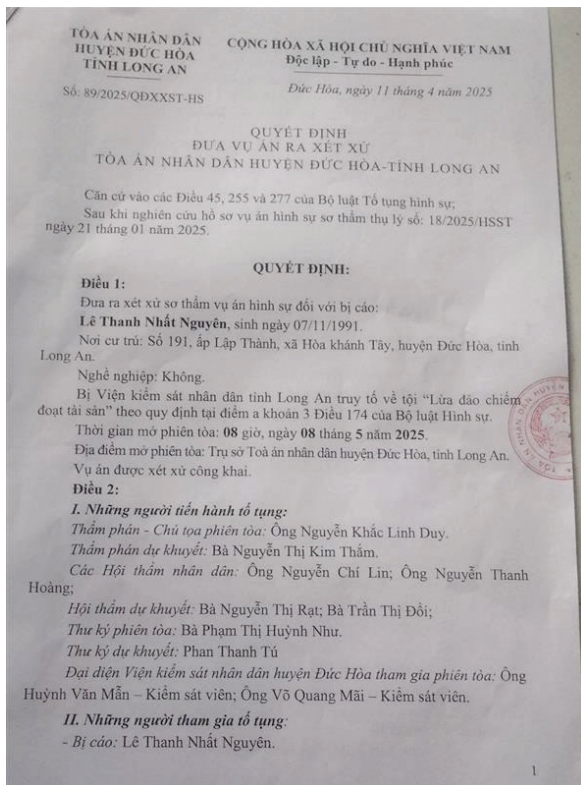
JUDGE

- Defendant;

Đỗ Bình An

- Participants in the case;

- Case file.



PEOPLE’S COURT

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

ĐỨC HÒA DISTRICT

Independence-Liberty-Happiness

LONG AN PROVINCE

No.: 89/2025/QDXXST-HS

Đức Hòa, 11 April 2025

DECISION:

TRY THE CASE IN THE COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE

Pursuant to Articles 45, 255 and 277 of the Criminal Procedure Code; After studying the case file of the first instance criminal case No. 18/2025/TLST-HS dated 21 January 2025

HEREBY DECIDE:

Decision No. 1.

Bring the case to a criminal trial against the defendant:

Full name: **Lê Thanh Nhất Nguyên**, birthdate: **7 November 1991**...

Trial start time: **08:00, 8 May 2025**.

Trial venue: **Đức Hòa District Courthouse, Long An Province...**

Recipients:

JUDGE

- Procuracy of Đức Hòa District;

Nguyễn Khắc Linh Duy

- Defendant;

- Participants in the case;

- Case file.