

VIETNAM



DEMOCRACY

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Self-immolation IN PROTEST OF RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION

Vietnam Democracy is published monthly by the Free Vietnam Alliance (FVA), a coalition of 35 Vietnamese democratic movements worldwide. Its purpose is to inform the international community of news and developments in Vietnam -- especially those that do not make it to the outside world -- and to share the Vietnamese effort and dream for democracy. We welcome all support and comments to make this a valuable forum.

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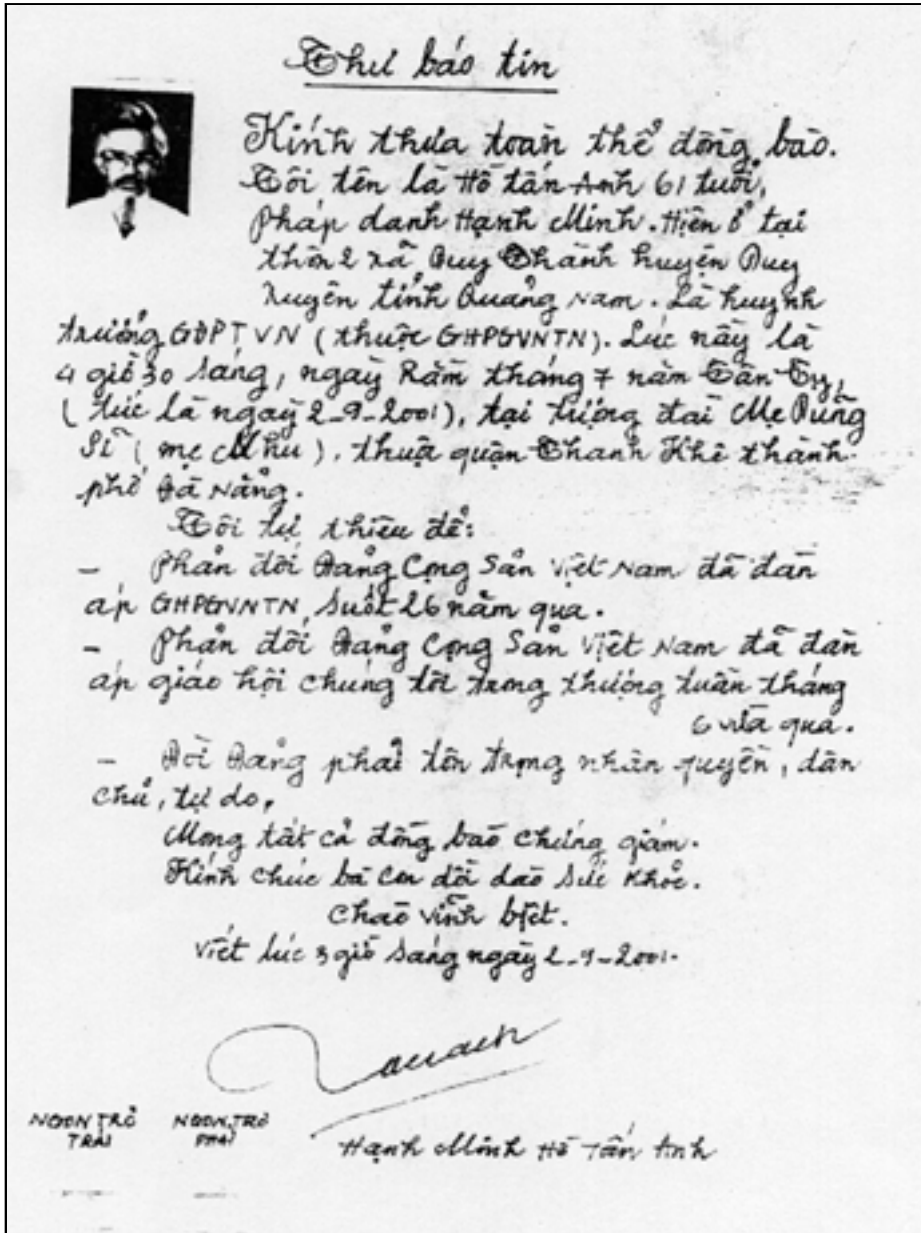


Buddhist Youth Counselor Ho Tan Anh

On September 2, 2001 Ho Tan Anh, a 61-year-old Buddhist Youth Counselor, set himself afire at a public park in Quang Nam-Da Nang province to protest the severe religious oppression by the Vietnamese communist government. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), which Ho Tan Anh adhered to, has been banned by the authorities and replaced with a state-owned church. Most national leaders of the UBCV are currently in exile or put under pagoda-arrest. The harassment of local leaders loyal to the UBCV across the country has escalated in the last three months; after Ven. Thich Quang Do announced the Church's intention to bring its 82-year-old patriarch to Saigon for urgent medical care. Ven. Thich Huyen Quang, Head of the UBCV, has been held in isolation for 19 years without trial.

Youth Counselor Ho Tan Anh left several letters for the leaders of his church, the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party and its government, the state-owned Buddhist church, young Vietnamese, etc. He also revealed that 13 other Buddhist Youth Counselors have expressed their wishes to commit self-immolation to protest the government's brutality toward all religions in Vietnam.

Ho Tan Anh's letters in Vietnamese are posted at our website www.lmvntd.org



Letter to Inform

Dear all fellow-compatriots

I am Ho Tan Anh, 61, religious name Hanh Minh, currently living at hamlet 2 of Duy Thanh ward, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province. I am a Youth Counselor of the Vietnamese Buddhist Family (of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam). It is now 4:30 am of July 15 of the Year of the Snake (September 2, 2001). I am at Mother Nhu Memorial Park in Thanh Khe district of Da Nang city.

I am committing self-immolation to:

- Protest the Vietnamese Communist Party's oppression of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam for the last 26 years.

- Protest [particularly] the Vietnamese Communist Party's oppression of our Church during the early weeks of June.

- Demand the Party respect human rights, democracy, and freedom.

All of my fellow-compatriots will be my witnesses

I wish you all good health.

Goodbye Forever.

Written at 3 am on September 9, 2001

(Signed)

Hanh Minh Ho Tan Anh

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(Finger print)

Right Index

(Finger print)



LETTER FROM THE CHURCH PATRIARCH FOLLOWING THE IMMOLATION

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
Tang Thong Institute

Buddhist Calendar Year 2545
No.: 04/VTT/XLTV

LETTER OF CONDOLENCES

To:
Family of Youth Counselor Ho Tan Anh and
The Leading Council of the Vietnamese Buddhist
Family of Quang Nam - Da Nang province

For the last several nights after hearing the news of Youth Counselor Ho Tan Anh's immolation to defend the faith on July 15 of the Year of the Snake (September 2, 2001) in Da Nang, I have been too torn to sleep at all. Buddha taught us to live bravely, strongly, and selflessly to give our best to humanity. However, given the current sadness and darkness of the country and the Church, Youth Counselor Ho Tan Anh decided to carry out Buddha's words of "Lighting up the torch to go forth".

In his visits with me, I advised him many times to stay alive. He is needed to replace those who are leaving due to old age, poor health, imprisonment, and ill treatment. For one Youth Counselor still alive means the Vietnamese Buddhist Family survives. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam now depends on the middle-age generation and the growing youth.

Through this letter, I would like to send my condolences to Counselor Ho Tan Anh's mother and his family as well as the Leading Council of the Vietnamese Buddhist Family in Quang Nam-Da Nang province. I sincerely pray for the soul of Counselor Ho Tan Anh to reach the ever happy realm and to be content with the 12 requests and over 40 pages of letters he left behind.

I have asked the International Buddhist

Information Office, the clergies of the Church, and the Leading Councils of the Vietnamese Buddhist Families inside and outside the country to organize prayer sessions for the soul of Counselor Ho Tan Anh for the next 100 days.

There is one thing I wish to insist on the Leading Council of the Vietnamese Buddhist Family in Quang Nam-Da Nang province: remain calm, patient, and yet fearless to lead the Vietnamese Buddhist Family and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam to the shore of revival to once again worship God and serve others. I know choosing death the way Counselor Ho Tan Anh did was the completion of the wish to consecrate a Buddhist life, but living with a calm mind and fearlessness before the fierce wind and angry waves is to actualize the principles of Tolerance - Thoughtfulness - Courage of a Buddhist to help humanity. After this storm, other followers, humankind, and the nation will need many hands to rebuild and to spread the teaching of Enlightenment. Brothers and Sisters, do remember my request.

In the name of Buddha.

Quang Ngai, September 4, 2001
(Signed)

Old Monk Thich Huyen Quang □

RADIO BROADCASTS TO VIETNAM RUN BY FREE VIETNAMESE:

1. New Horizon (Chân Tr*o*i M*S*i):
8:30 - 9:30 pm Vietnam time on 15750 khz

2. Radio Free Asia (Á Châu T*o* Do)
7:30 - 8:30 am Vietnam time
on 5865 khz and 7415 khz
9:00 - 10:00 pm Vietnam time
on 5865 khz, 6240 khz and 7520 khz

INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIONS TO RENEWED CRACKDOWNS ON VIETNAMESE POLITICAL DISSIDENTS

LETTER FROM
COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS

August 23, 2001
Committee to Protect Journalists
330 Seventh Avenue -- 12th floor New York, NY 10001

His Excellency Tran Duc Luong
President, Socialist Republic of Vietnam
c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hanoi, Vietnam
Via Facsimile: 011-84-4-823-1872

Your Excellency:

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is concerned about the harassment of Lt. Gen. Tran Do and the confiscation of his memoirs. We ask you to encourage Vietnamese officials to return Tran's manuscript immediately.

Tran, a former general in the Vietnam People's Army, also served as head of the Culture, Literature, and Art Department of the Party Central Committee and as deputy chairman of the National Assembly. He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1999 after writing essays calling for political reform.

His memoirs, written in three separate sections, contain his thoughts on the future of the country, as well as his analysis of the 9th Party Congress held in April, according to international media reports. The second section was published overseas last year.

On June 12, the Hanoi-based Tran was in Ho Chi Minh City visiting his son. He brought the 83-page third section of his memoirs. On arrival in Ho Chi Minh City, Tran took the manuscript to a copier where he printed 15 copies to distribute to his family and friends, according to a U.S.-based journalist familiar with the case.

On his way back from the copy shop, public security officers stopped Tran's car and confiscated all the copies of his manuscript. He was then brought to the local precinct and questioned before being released.

Authorities brought Tran in for questioning again on June 22. Soon after the interrogation session, the 77-year-old Tran fell and was taken to a local emergency room. He was later transferred to the Friendship Hospital in Hanoi, where he is now in critical condition.

Tran is under tight surveillance at the hospital, and a sign on his door states that only family members may visit, the U.S.-based journalist told CPJ. Tran has

repeatedly asked authorities to return his manuscript. He has also written to the Vietnam Writers' Union, of which he is a member, asking for their support.

In one protest letter, he wrote that, "These 83 pages of my diary constitute the heartfelt and ultimate works of my life as a writer. They truly reflect a part of our people's history which needs to be recorded....I have the right to do what I want with my own manuscript," according to Agence France-Presse.

As a nonpartisan organization of journalists dedicated to the defense of press freedom worldwide, CPJ is appalled that a manuscript has been confiscated simply because authorities do not approve of its contents. We urge Your Excellency to ensure that all copies of Tran's manuscript are returned, and that he is allowed to write and publish without fear of reprisals.

CPJ respectfully reminds Your Excellency that Vietnam is a signatory to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which obliges your government to ensure that citizens are free to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, without interference. These freedoms are also guaranteed under Article 69 of the Vietnamese Constitution.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We await your response.

Sincerely,

Ann K. Cooper

Executive Director

Cc:

- Prime Minister Phan Van Khai
- Le Van Bang, Ambassador to the United States
- Pham Quang Nghi, Minister of Culture and Information.
- Robert Porter, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Hanoi.
- Human Rights Watch.
- Index on Censorship.
- International Center for Journalists.
- Lorne W. Craner, United States Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.
- Robert Porter, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy in VN.
- Reporters Sans Frontières.
- Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for HR.
(and other human rights and journalist organizations)

PRESS RELEASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

7 September 2001

Vietnam: Donors Should Protest Renewed Harassment of Dissidents

(New York, September 7, 2001) -- The Vietnamese government has launched one of its most intense crackdowns in recent years against its critics, Human Rights Watch charged today. This past week, some fifteen dissidents, many of them former members of the Vietnamese Communist Party and military veterans, have been detained and interrogated.

Human Rights Watch urged the government to cease the harassment and release any detainees still in custody, and called on Vietnam's donors to raise the issue directly with government authorities.

On September 5, police in Hanoi detained and interrogated former military historian Pham Que Duong, writer Hoang Tien, former high-ranking Party cadre Hoang Minh Chinh, journalist Nguyen Vu Binh, and film producer Duong Hung. Sources in Vietnam have reported that another ten activists, including scholar Tran Van Khue in Ho Chi Minh City and geologist and political essayist Nguyen Thanh Giang, have also been detained, at least temporarily, since September 6.

"This appears to be the largest and most systematic effort to intimidate Vietnamese dissidents in a long time," said Sidney Jones, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Despite all the speculation after the Communist Party Congress earlier this year that a more reform-minded group was now in power, this is evidence that the new regime may be no more tolerant of dissent than the previous one."

On Wednesday, September 5, Pham Que Duong, 70, was arrested at his Hanoi home at 7 a.m. by a dozen policemen, who delivered a written summons ordering him to go to police headquarters. He was interrogated by the police until 8 p.m. that night, when he was allowed to return home. His house was searched while he was in custody. On September 6 he was ordered to return to police headquarters for further interrogation on a daily basis until further notice.

Two other dissidents, writer Hoang Tien and film producer Duong Hung, who stopped by Pham Que Duong's home on September 5 to inquire about his well-being, were subsequently taken into custody and escorted to police headquarters for questioning.

That same morning political critics Hoang Minh Chinh and Nguyen Vu Binh were arrested at Hoang Minh Chinh's home and taken to police headquarters. The dissidents remain in detention during the day but are allowed to return home late in the evening on the condition that they report to police headquarters every morning. Police reportedly have been stationed outside of several dissidents' homes and have taken visitors to police stations for questioning. Mobile telephones of most of Vietnam's leading dissidents have been disconnected since September 5, making confirmation of their whereabouts difficult.

On September 2, just days before the interrogations, Pham Que Duong and Tran Van Khue submitted a request to the government to form an independent anti-corruption

organization. The request listed Pham as the Hanoi spokesman of the "National Association to Fight Corruption, and Tran Van Khue as the Ho Chi Minh City spokesman. In February and again in June 2001, Pham Que Duong, Hoang Minh Chinh, and Hoang Tien joined more than a dozen other dissidents in signing joint appeals to Party officials calling for the repeal of Administrative Detention Decree 31/CP, which allows the detention of dissidents for up to two years without trial.

Human Rights Watch called on Vietnam's donors to protest the detentions when they meet in Tokyo on November 15-16 for an annual conference under the auspices of the World Bank.

"Vietnam's donors should strongly condemn this crackdown on the open debate of democratic reforms and corruption," said Jones. "A strategy for economic development must include concrete steps to ensure respect for basic rights and freedoms."

Background

Dissidents who have been arrested or ordered to police headquarters for questioning this week include the following:

* Pham Que Duong, 70, is a former colonel in the People's Liberation Army. He joined the VCP in 1948, and in 1982 became editor in chief of Tap Chi Lich Su Quan Su (Military History Review). In 1999, Pham Que Duong quit the VCP in solidarity with Tran Do, a prominent dissident who was ousted from the party at that time, and became a democracy activist. Since then his house has been searched many times, his telephone tapped, and his e-mail access terminated.

* Tran Van Khue, 65, a scholar, author and democracy activist, works for the Social Science Institute in Ho Chi Minh City. He has written two books, "Dialogue 2000" and "Dialogue 2001". His name was listed as the Ho Chi Minh City representative on the application to form the anti-corruption organization.

* Hoang Tien, 68, has been writing short stories and novels, essays, and articles for more than forty years. He served as an officer in the People's Liberation Army. In 1996, he published a series of articles condemning the arrest and trial of Dalat dissident Ha Si Phu. Subsequently Hoang Tien's telephone line was severed, and the police summoned him to headquarters for questioning. He is now forbidden to publish.

* Hoang Minh Chinh, 81, a former high-ranking Party cadre, was director of the Marxist-Leninist Institute until 1967, when he was imprisoned for five years for criticizing Party policy. Since then he has been imprisoned and put under house arrest numerous times for his outspoken views.

* Nguyen Vu Binh, 33, resigned his position as a reporter for the VCP ideological review Tap Chi Cong San (Journal of Communism) after he sent a letter seeking permission to form an opposition political party to the President and Chairman of the National Assembly in September 2000.

* Nguyen Thanh Giang, 65, a respected geologist and outspoken intellectual, has openly advocated human rights and multiparty democracy since 1989. In March 4, 1999, he was arrested and charged with "abusing democratic rights." After widespread international protest Giang was released in May 1999. □

"My Mouth IS the Law" -- Excerpts from Dr. Nguyen Thanh Giang's Report on the Tense Day of September 5, 2001

Tens of Public Security (PS) agents manned the outer circle then the inner circle before they broke in to snatch Colonel Pham Que Duong, threw him into their van and sped away. Also arrested or summoned that day were Hoang Minh Chinh, Le Chi Quang, Tran Dai Son, Tran Ba, Le Chi Quang's mother, Nguyen Thu and Nguyen Doan - two of the eleven signatories of the letter calling for a fight against corruption, and others. Anyone happened to arrive at Pham Que Duong's or Hoang Minh Chinh's residence on September 5 were brought to the [police] stations of Hang Ma or Hang Buom [street], including Tran Dung Tien, Hoang Tien, Nguyen Vu Binh, etc. Several young friends of Col. Pham Que Duong's children stopping by on their way to work could not escape the net, either. Tran Khue and Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan were placed on a plane and expelled to HCM city.

[Hoang Minh Chinh] At 9:30 am, I made the phone call and met Mrs. Hoang Minh Chinh. She said they already took him away. I offered to come over but she advised me not to because six PS agents were still sitting there. Nguyen Vu Binh who just arrived [at her house] was also arrested. At 7:30 pm on the same day, Mr. Hoang Minh Chinh called me from a public phone and invited me over. He then recited the incident at the Hanoi Public Security Station. He announced his intention to protest with a hunger strike and resolutely refused to respond to the unreasonable questions by the PS. He described the scene where the PS continued asking questions and he continued to refuse to answer. They kept throwing questions at him to the point he burst out laughing in disgust The next morning, he was again summoned to the station for more interrogation. On the third day, when the PS came he absolutely refused to go. He insisted on staying home for self-protection because he believed the PS planned to kill him. They forthrightly admitted to his wife and children that if necessary they would sacrifice one life for the sake of security ... According to his story, in the evening of [September] 6, after the interrogation session, a PS agent brought him home on a motorcycle. At an intersections the driver made a sudden and very sharp turn as if he intended to slam Mr. Chinh's head to the ground.

At 15 minutes to 22:00 on that politically earth-shaking day in Hanoi, I walked out of Mr. Hoang Minh Chinh's residence and encountered 4 brawny PS agents - one in uniform and three undercover. They brought me to the Hang Bai Station.

They asked: "Mr. Hoang Minh Chinh is being investigated by the Security. What are you here for?"

I said: "I don't know what you are investigating. I only know he is a respectable person. Mr. Hoang Minh Chinh worked for the revolution even before the Uprising. He was imprisoned in Son La by the French when I was very young and before all of you were born."

They asked: "Do you know that they are forming the Anti-Corruption Association and has anyone asked you to sign on [as member]?"

I said: "I wouldn't have to tell you if anyone handed me the invitation. Go ahead and bring me to court. There I would praise

the sacred and urgent mission of such an association. Anyone who prevent the formation of this association oppose the anti-corruption effort itself. There I would express my gladness if being considered one of the founding members of the Association.

... [Le Chi Quang] Two days later, the young, resilient law student Le Chi Quang came and told me the spectacular siege and strike by the PS agents at his house earlier. He said in the afternoon of September 5, as he walked to the gate he saw about 30 PS agents in street clothes with walkie-talkies in hands. At 2:20 pm, a group of 10 people broke in and issued the summon signed by Lieutenant Colonel Vu Cong Long for the reason of "To question about activities concerning national security". They let Quang put on his pants and drove him to the PS station of the Dong Da district. At this station, three agents, named Cuong, Tam, and Doan, took turns interrogate him. They asked if he was the author of the essay "Suggestions for the 1992 Constitution". He said yes. They then grilled him on the content of the letter but he said he would discuss such matters with the Constitution Amendment Steering Committee and have no obligation to talk to the PS on that subject. When they asked whether he joined the Anti-Corruption Association he said he would be glad to join such an organization because it would help the Party and the Government to combat corruption effectively. The birth of such association would be suitable to the wishes of the Party and the people.

The interrogation of Le Chi Quang was centered on Mr. Pham Que Duong's and Tran Khue's application to form the Anti-Corruption Association. He was upset by the three hours of interrogation and even more angry at the insolent attitude of the agent named Tam who was unbelievably uncultivated. Following are the exchanges between them at the end of the session:

- I release you just because you are so flimsy. Otherwise, I would have detained you. However, I forbid you to leave the house.

- Is there any legal document forbidding me from leaving the house?

- I don't need any document.

- So, it is just a verbal decree?

- Yes, my mouth is the law.

- Then I will leave the house if I want to

- I will arrest you immediately if you leave the house. Don't you dare me!

Ater the wrath of September 5, they rest their hands to celebrate but did not forget to order more crimes. All the phone lines at the residences of Pham Que Duong, Hoang Minh Chinh, Tran Dung Tien, Hoang Tien, Nguyen Thanh Giang, Tran Khue, Nguyen Vu Binh, etc. were simultaneously disconnected.

Upon hearing the news of the US House of Representatives passage of the Vietnam Human Rights Act, [the Party's] press, radio, and television broadcast joined their loud voices in accusing the US of fabrication and distortion of Vietnam's human rights record. If only the international community could see just these phone cut-offs, it would know conclusively who the fabricators are. □

Vietnamese Sent to Samoa Sweatshops

AP Sept 1 2001

Indictment: Beating Workers Was OK'd

By JEAN CHRISTENSEN

HONOLULU (AP) - The owner of an American Samoa garment factory assured a manager he would take responsibility for any death resulting from the beating of Vietnamese workers who didn't follow directions, according to new federal charges.

The result was a melee last fall at Daewoosa Samoa Ltd. in which one worker from Vietnam lost her eye and another suffered permanent hearing loss, a grand jury indictment alleges.

The now-closed factory had made clothes for J.C. Penney Co. and other retailers before the U.S. Labor Department reported worker abuses in December.

The new indictment includes 22 new counts against the factory's owner, Kil Soo Lee, a South Korean national who already faced charges of involuntary servitude and forced labor, and two of his assistants.

It came hours before two other former employees pleaded guilty Friday to conspiring to hold guest workers from Vietnam in involuntary servitude in the U.S. territory 2,300 miles south of Hawaii.

Elekana Nu'uuli Ioane admitted that, at Lee's direction, he told American Samoa laborers to beat Vietnamese workers who weren't helping to meet a critical delivery deadline. Sialava'a Fagaima admitted attacking workers at Ioane's and Lee's directions, including putting out one woman's eye with a pipe.

Lee, 51, was arrested by FBI agents in March in American Samoa and brought to Hawaii.

The indictment also accuses two assistants, Virginia Solia'i and Robert Ati Malala, of conspiring with Lee to hold 250 workers from Vietnam and China in involuntary servitude through threats, violence and confiscation of their passports and airline tickets.

"A basic operating principle of Daewoosa was to profit from the manufacture of garments, using sweatshop labor performed by a captive work force of imported workers from Vietnam and China," the indictment said.

Lee also is charged with extortion for allegedly forcing a worker to sign over a \$2,274 back-wage check she had been given as a result of regulatory action; money laundering for depositing the check; and attempting to bribe a Bank of Hawaii official to influence his application for a \$500,000 loan.

Lee's public defender, Alexander Silvert, said, "It's common practice for prosecutors to add additional charges when they believe the original charges are weak."

Solia'i surrendered to authorities and pleaded innocent Friday. An arrest warrant was issued for Malala.

The three are portrayed in the 19-page indictment as working in concert with American Samoa public safety officials to deport workers who complained about working and living conditions at the gated factory compound.

Lee allegedly directed a Samoan manager of the factory to beat Vietnamese workers who did not work or follow directions, assuring him that he "would take responsibility if a Vietnamese worker were to die as a result," the indictment said.

It said the manager told Samoan factory workers that Lee had authorized the beating of the Vietnamese workers and that they were to prepare themselves for it.

On Nov. 28, a manager dragged a 21-year-old Vietnamese worker away from her work station, starting an altercation in which the woman's eye was damaged, a 31-year-old man lost hearing, and several others were injured, the indictment said.

Solia'i allegedly instructed Samoan workers to file false reports with police the following day suggesting that the Samoan workers had acted in self-defense. Solia'i's attorney, Pamela Tamashiro, said she couldn't comment on the accusations without thoroughly reviewing them.

The attorney general's office in American Samoa also declined to comment, saying it hadn't reviewed the document.

If convicted on all counts, Lee could face 390 years in prison, Malala could face 80 years, and Solia'i could face 210 years.

Solia'i is being held pending a Tuesday bail hearing, with a trial tentatively set for Feb. 19. Lee's trial is expected to be delayed until next year.

Editor's notes:

The Vietnamese government knew of the problems early on but decided to help the Korean factory owners send the beaten workers back to Vietnam in hope of concealing the incidents from the Press and the US laws. The scheme failed. □

VOICE OF THE MASSES

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
League of Clergies in Saigon
Lien Tri Pagoda
153 Luong Dinh Cua street
Ward An Khanh, District 2, HCM City

Respectfully sent to:

Mr. Nong Duc Manh, Secretary General of the VCP
Mr. Tran Duc Luong, President of the SRV
Mr. Phan Van Khai, Premier of the SRV
Mr. Nguyen Van An, Chairman of the SRV National
Assembly

Dear Gentlemen,

We, clergies of the League of Clergies for the Defense of the Faith / Saigon, an association under the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, would like to send to the Leaders this open letter to convey some suggestions and demands of the citizens who are suffering from the policies of the Party and Government.

Gentlemen, you have constantly declared your determination to carry out "Doi Moi" resolutely but in real life never let the Citizens voice their sincere thought about that reform effort. Even worse, you have continued to oppress those conscientious citizens and religions whose opinions differ from your preset viewpoints. After the IX Party Congress, the new leadership proves even more extreme. [People, including] former Party members, are isolated and harassed such as the cases of Messrs. Tran Do, Vu Cao Quan, Hoang Minh Chinh, Nguyen Thanh Giang, Pham Que Duong, Le Hong Ha, Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, etc. just because they expressed their opinions on the national affairs. These opinions do not fit your viewpoints yet match the wishes of the people.

As for the major religions in Vietnam, you are even more heavy-handed. The records include:

- The arrest, detainment, terrorization, threats against Catholic priests;
- The prohibition of Hoa Hao followers from traveling to their Holy Land for major religious events; the arrest and condemnation of Mr. Truong Van Duc to 12 years in prison and Mr. Ho Van Trong to 4;
- The banning of Protestant followers from practicing their faith; the confiscation of the lands of Highland ethnic tribes, consequently driving tens of thousands of people into starvation and causing them to flee to Kampuchea as refugees;

As for our Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the most dreadful incident took place on June 7, 2001. On that date

Venerable Thich Quang Do, head of the Hoa Dao Institute, had intended to travel to Quang Ngai province to bring the Patriarch, Ven. Thich Huyen Quang, to Saigon for medical treatment after 20 years of being held in isolation. Such action would be ethical and legal because the term of detainment of Ven. Thich Huyen Quang expired in 1997. However, the new leadership of the Party and Government not only forbid [Ven. Thich Huyen Quang to leave] but also imposes a new 2-year detainment term on Ven. Thich Quang Do, starting June 1, 2001!

Furthermore, [the State] launched a campaign with its newspapers, broadcast, and anonymous letters to slander the Venerable in such a deceitful and uncultivated manner. Other leaders of our Church were simultaneously interrogated, terrorized, isolated, disconnected from phone service, banned from traveling even within the city, etc. Such measures were taken against Ven. Thich Duc Nhuan, the Advisor of the Hoa Dao Institute as well as Reverends Thich Tue Sy, Thich Quang Hue, Thich Tam An, Thich Long Trinh, Thich Thanh Huyen, Thich Nguyen Ly, Thich Hue Dang, and myself.

Particularly severe harassment, threat, and isolation were imposed on the League of Clergies in Thua Thien-Hue province, Ven. Thich Thien Hanh and Reverends Thich Chi Mau, Thich Chi Thang, Thich Phuoc Vien, Thich Chon Niem in Hue, Rev. Thich Hai Tang in Quang Tri, Rev. Thich Thanh Quang in Da Nang. Rev. Thich Thai Hoa and 17 other monks were evicted from the Tu Hieu pagoda.

Meanwhile, Rev. Thich Thien Minh continues to be kept at prison camp Z30 in Xuan Loc, Dong Nai province. He has been imprisoned for 23 years for raising his voice demanding religious freedom and human rights, and for refusing to abandon his church, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, to join the State-owned church erected by the Party.

Gentlemen, these incidents have shown the new leadership of the Party and Government still has not the true intention to reform; still cling to its dictatorial power to hide from its responsibilities for the nation backwardness, poverty, and suffering. Given the current condition of social vices with tens of thousands of young drug addicts, prostitutes, robbers, murderers, and an epidemic of bribery and corruption with no regards for the laws and laws enforcement, how could the Party continue to brag the words "tradition" and "culture" in its mouth and on its propaganda press.

Therefore, to escape the current dangerous state of the nation and the oppressed state of the people, we, as clergies and citizens, respectfully request you study and implement the CALL for DEMOCRACY in VIETNAM, which Ven. Thich Quang Do announced on February 2, 2001 on behalf of the two Institute Councils of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. This Call was sent to you and our overseas compatriots who have enthusiastically agreed with 300,000 signatures of support. We hope you will turn around, dislodge any prejudices, and carry out this Call for Democracy in Vietnam to bring the country out of the current impasse.

Saigon, August 24, 2001

On behalf of the League of Clergies for the Defense of the Faith / Saigon

(Signed and sealed)

Ty kheo Thich Khong Tanh

□