

Buddhist Youth Leader Lê Công Cầu goes on hunger strike to protest ban on visiting critically-ill UBCV leader Thích Quảng Độ

PARIS, 15^h May 2017 (VCHR) – The Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) strongly protests the inhumane attitude of the Vietnamese government regarding **Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ**, 89 year-old Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). According to reports received from the UBCV, Thích Quảng Độ, who is in very poor health, called Lê Công Cầu, UBCV Secretary-general and head of the Buddhist Youth Movement yesterday (Sunday 14th May), asking him to come urgently to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) to discuss his health situation and related UBCV affairs.

Lê Công Cầu, who lives in Huế, immediately purchased a plane ticket and was ready to travel to Saigon today, 15th May 2017. However, the Security Police, who monitor the telephones of both Thích Quảng Độ and Lê Công Cầu, intercepted the communication. Yesterday evening, Security Police came to Lê Công Cầu's home in Huế and prohibited him travelling. Indeed, they forbade him from stepping outside his home on any pretext, even to buy food. The Police had no official orders, and refused to give any explication for this ban. Lê Công Cầu strongly denounces this arbitrary Police action, and is beginning a hunger strike from today until 22nd May in protest. As [VCHR has reported](#), just last week Security Police harassed and interrogated Lê Công Cầu and other members of the UBCV's Buddhist Youth Movement as they prepared to celebrate the Vesak (Birth of Buddha) in Huế.

“Hanoi has detained Thích Quảng Độ for decades, without any justification or charge”, said VCHR President Võ Văn Ái. “Today, when his health is failing, Police prevent him from receiving support from his followers. Vietnam should be ashamed of its base and inhumane treatment of Thích Quảng Độ, a Buddhist monk and scholar who is respected the world over for his life-long devotion to the cause of religious freedom, human rights and democracy in Vietnam”.

The Vietnam Committee on Human Rights calls on all governments, the United Nations, international institutions and civil society organizations to press Vietnam to lift all restrictions on Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ and guarantee his right to communicate freely and receive visits from UBCV members; immediately lift the travel ban on Lê Công Cầu and enable him to visit Thích Quảng Độ, in conformity with Vietnam's international obligations as a state party to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.