

## **At the 61st Session of the UN Commission Human Rights : Vo Van Ai denounces Vietnam's secret service GD2 and reveals a Communist Party instruction manual on religious repression**

I PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA - Speaking at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva today, Mr. **Vo Van Ai**, President of the Paris-based **Vietnam Committee on Human Rights** (VCHR) and Vice-President of the **International Federation of Human Rights** (FIDH) condemned the institutionalisation of State repression in Vietnam and accused the Vietnamese government of “legalising” repression under legislation that criminalizes religious and political dissent. Mr. Ai spoke on behalf of the FIDH, the France-based **“Working Together for Human Rights”** and the VCHR.

Mr. Ai released a series of letters by high-ranking Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) veterans denouncing the excessive powers of the military intelligence services, known as **“General Department No. 2”**, or **GD2**. Their authors include top-level VCP figures such as General **Vo Nguyen Giap**, hero of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, General **Nguyen Nam Khanh** and **Pham Van Xo**, former VCP Central Committee members, General **Dong Van Cong**, former military commander of Interzones 9 and 7, **Nguyen Tai**, former Deputy Minister of Public Security and many others.

These prominent communist veterans, many of whom are founder members of the VCP, accuse the DG2 of using its unbridled powers to destabilize, slander and systematically oppose reformist elements within the VCP such as Vo Nguyen Giap, Vo Van Kiet etc., not hesitating to use torture and political assassination to eliminate potential enemies. According to General Nguyen Nam Khanh, the GD2 *“wields excessive powers and unlimited controls, it sabotages democracy, undermines internal unity, and creates deep divisions and factions within the Party. GD2 can slander or sanction anyone it wants, infiltrate its agents anywhere, mount business ventures, pretext so-called “intelligence” operations to go on spending sprees, set up bogus “special intelligence units” as a pretext to obtain funds”...*

*“Instead of seeking to curb the powers of these secret services, which undermine the promotion and respect of human rights”,* said Mr. Ai, the Vietnamese government has reinforced and even “legalized” their powers under the 1996 Ordinance on Intelligence Services and Decree 96/CP on Defence Intelligence (1997). The institutionalization of the GD2's occult practices is not an isolated phenomenon. *“On the pretext of building the rule of law, for the past several years, the Vietnamese government has adopted extensive legislation, circulars and regulations codifying these repressive and arbitrary practices in order to protect the ruling minority and exclude all divergent political or*

*religious views”.*

Vo Van Ai also presented to the UN Commission a compilation of excerpts from a secret VCP document, of which the VCHR had obtained a copy. This 602-page document, published by the Institute of Public Security Science in Hanoi with a print-run of 1 million copies (all numbered to trace back eventual “leaks”), gives *“a detailed plan of the Vietnamese government’s plan to dismantle un-recognized religions”* beginning with the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). A veritable instruction manual on religious persecution, the document instructs Security Police how to promote “Buddhism with socialist orientations” and divide and suppress the outlawed UBCV.

*“This secret document, which the Vietnamese government has sought to dissimulate from international opinion at all costs, is the indisputable proof of the regime’s hostile policy towards religions”,* Mr. Ai told the Commission. *“Behind the government’s fine words about respecting religious freedom and human rights lies a decades-old policy designed to eradicate all religions outside Communist Party control”.* The VCP document details the State’s pervasive mechanisms of repression, orchestrated at the highest levels of State, whose sole aim is to crush independent religious movements which, *“after 30 years of totalitarian rule, constitute the sole prevailing elements of Vietnamese civil society”.*

Mr. Vo Van Ai also expressed deep concern on the situation of UBCV Patriarch **Thich Huyen Quang** and his Deputy **Thich Quang Do**, who are *“imprisoned within their Monasteries, denied freedom of movement and the right to freely practice their religion”* under false accusations of *“possessing state secrets”*. All UBCV clergy and followers are subjected to harassment and arrest. As the Commission opened in Geneva, he said, the VCHR received an urgent communication from UBCV monk **Thich Thien Minh**, released in a government amnesty after 26 years in prison for his support of the banned UBCV. Thich Thien Minh said that he and his brother, with whom he is currently living, had received threats of death if Thich Thien Minh did not cease all contacts with human rights organizations and stop criticizing Vietnam’s human rights violations on the foreign media. Security Police specifically warned Thich Thien Minh not to reveal the names of political prisoners nor describe the harsh detention conditions in the camp.

Not only UBCV followers, said Mr. Ai, but all those who peacefully exercise their legitimate freedoms and rights in Vietnam suffer *“arbitrary arrest, detention, harassments, Police interrogations and round-the-clock surveillance”*. He cited the cases of critics close to the VCP, former VCP and military veterans such as **Hoang Minh Chinh, Nguyen Thanh Giang, Hoang Tien, Pham Que Duong** or **Tran Khue**, cyber-dissidents **Pham Hong Son, Nguyen Khac Toan** and **Nguyen Vu Binh**, who

are in prison or under house arrest for their dissenting views.

Mr. Vo Van Ai also presented an **audio message** addressed to the UN Commission on Human Rights by one of Vietnam's most prominent dissidents, UBCV Deputy **Thich Quang Do**, sent clandestinely from Vietnam. This is the first Message that Thich Quang Do has addressed to the international community since he was first placed under detention over 25 years ago.

This message was originally recorded on video, but the young monk who made the recording, **Thich Vien Phuong**, was arrested on March 30th as he left Thich Quang Do's Monastery. Security Police confiscated the video tape, and subjected Thich Vien Phuong to intensive interrogations. In the meantime, the UBCV network succeeded in sending an audio tape to Mr. Vo Van Ai, which he released at the UN Commission on Human Rights today.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Commission on the same day, VCHR Vice-President **Penelope Faulkner** expressed concern on the massive and systematic violations of civil and political rights in Vietnam, in particular the abuses of religious freedom against members of the banned UBCV. She also condemned Vietnam's adoption of new laws restricting human rights, in particular **Decree 38/2005/ND-CP** signed by the Prime Minister on 18.3.2005 on the right to demonstrate. Decree 38 prohibits public gatherings outside State agencies and public buildings, and requires that all demonstrations be approved by the State. This decree will effectively ban the rising wave of peaceful public demonstrations outside the National Assembly and other government buildings in Hanoi by farmers and peasants protesting official corruption and State confiscation of land. When one such protest took place outside his home, VCP General-Secretary Nong Duc Manh declared : *"It is abnormal for people to demonstrate with banners. In some cases, our democracy in Vietnam is excessive !"*