

International community pays tribute to Buddhist Patriarch Thích Quảng Độ, proponent of freedom and human rights in Vietnam



Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, 1928-2020 (Photo IBIB)

PARIS, 27 February 2020 (VCHR & IBIB) - The **Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ**, Fifth Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) died on Saturday 22nd February 2020 in Saigon at the age of 93. He suffered from diabetes, a heart condition and high blood pressure for many years. His health was also gravely affected by harsh living conditions and inadequate medical care during more than four decades in prison, internal exile and house arrest.

A revered spiritual leader, renowned scholar and writer, Thích Quảng Độ was an outspoken

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

dissident and pillar of the movement for human rights, religious freedom and democracy in Vietnam. Subjected to persecution, torture, detention and police surveillance until the very last moments of his life, he refused to bend to the Vietnamese Communist authorities. For millions of people all over the world, Thích Quang Độ was a hero and an inspiration. For the **International Buddhist Information Bureau** and the **Vietnam Committee on Human Rights**, he was our mentor and our guiding light. He will continue to inspire our actions to promote freedom of religion or belief, human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Vietnam and beyond.

The passing of **Thích Quảng Độ** has been widely reported in the international media, with articles in the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Time Magazine](#), [AP](#), [AFP](#), [Japan Times](#), [the Republic](#) (India), [the Standard \(Hong Kong\)](#) and many more, and messages of condolence and support have poured in from international personalities and admirers all over the world. We publish below some of the first messages as a means of honouring and remembering this hero of our times.



Mairead Corrigan Maguire,

*Nobel Peace Price Laureate, (1976)
Ireland*

Please accept my condolences on the

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

Death of Thich Quang Do
His spirit of peace and nonviolence
Was an inspiration to many people
And he will be remembered for
His great witness to loving kindness
To all
Peace



Rafto Foundation,
Bergen, Norway

"I am isolated but I am not alone, for I am part of the Rafto family (Thích Quảng Độ in a recorded message at the Rafto Foundation 30th year anniversary in 2016).

It is with great sadness the Rafto Foundation received the news that the most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, Rafto laureate 2006, passed away on Saturday 22nd February, aged 93. As a Buddhist monk, dissident, scholar and patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) he dedicated his life to the promotion of democracy, human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam.

As a human rights defender Thích Quảng Độ payed a heavy price. He was persecuted, imprisoned and tortured. He has spent the last three decades in

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

house arrest and has been under close government control and surveillance until his very last moment.

“Thich Quang Do’s

non-violent struggle for human rights, democracy and religious freedom will continue to be a great inspiration to the Rafto Foundation and to his many followers in Vietnam and internationally. He will be deeply missed by the entire Family of Rafto Laureates, that he was such an important part of, despite his isolation. We will contribute to keeping his legacy alive”, says Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt, Executive Director of the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights.

Thích Quảng Độ was never allowed by Vietnamese authorities to travel to Norway to receive the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize in 2006. Therese Jebsen of the Rafto Foundation was arrested and interrogated by Security Police when she came to the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery to hand Thích Quảng Độ the Award diploma.

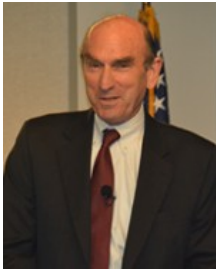


Carl Gershman,
*President, National Endowment for
Democracy*

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

Thich Quang Do was admired by freedom-loving people around the world, and they mourn his passing. He was an example for all humanity of tolerance, compassion, and devotion to human rights and dignity. He suffered greatly for his courage and his unyielding commitment to principle and truth.



Elliott Abrams,

Senior

Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, Former Chairman, US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Former US Secretary of State for Human Rights

Thich Quang Do was a hero to millions around the world for his steadfast, peaceful, conscientious support of the freedom of his own people and the cause of freedom around the world. He is one of the millions of victims of communism who paid with years of suffering, deprivation, and isolation for his insistence on freedom of conscience, thought, and religion. Few of us can aspire to the courage he always showed, but we can all be inspired by his life of benevolence and dedication.

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>



Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett,

*President, Lantos Foundation, USA; Past
Chair, USCIRF*

I join millions around the world in mourning the passing of the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam Nam.

Thich Quang Do, was surely a light that shone in the darkness- standing with unflinching courage and integrity for freedom of religion, conscience and belief for all people everywhere. His life's journey was one of selfless sacrifice and though he has passed on, the illumination and understanding that he brought to so many shines on. Because of him, the hope for freedom, democracy and human rights continues to burn in Vietnam Nam and beyond.



Dr. Ahmed Shaheed,

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

“It is with deep sadness that I learned of the passing of Patriarch Thich Quang Do in Saigon. During this time of mourning I would like to express sincere condolences to the Buddhist community in Vietnam and pay tribute to Thich Quang Do’s life-long and courageous commitment to peace and the freedom of conscience.”



Nina Shea,

Director of the Center for Religious Freedom, Hudson Institute, USA

I am very sorry to hear this news. Thich Quang Do was a great example of the struggle for religious freedom. While confined and repressed, he, through strong conviction and gentle resistance, drew admiration from throughout the world and across religions. His life will continue to inspire me and all who knew of him, thanks to your own tireless efforts on his behalf. With deepest condolences.

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>



Chris Smith,
Member of the US Congress

"I am deeply saddened to hear that the [Most Venerable Thich Quang Do](#) passed away over the weekend at age 91," said Smith, who has chaired 11 hearings on human rights in Vietnam. "He was a courageous champion for human rights in Vietnam and one of the world's longest [held prisoners of conscience](#). I had the privilege to meet him during a visit to Vietnam. He called to account Vietnam's communist regime for its suppression of Buddhists, Christians, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and other religious believers and was detained unjustly for decades until his death. His dream of a Vietnam where everyone can speak their mind or practice their beliefs without coercion will never die and one day, hopefully soon, will be realized."



Kristina Arriaga,

*former Vice-Chair, US Commission on
International Religious Freedom*

Venerable Thich Quang Do's courage before oppression and resilience during imprisonment reminded the world that we are all born in dignity, with the right to live according to our deeply held convictions. The world is a richer place because he lived amongst us and sacrificed his freedom so others could keep theirs. Freedom-loving people all over the world will mourn him. I am heartbroken.



Daniel J. Kritenbrink,

US Ambassador to Vietnam

On behalf of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam, I would like to express our sincere condolences on the passing of The Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

Thich Quang Do was a tireless advocate for religious freedom and human rights, and he remained committed to the non-violent pursuit of justice. These

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

peaceful efforts garnered him numerous international awards, and he was nominated several times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I had the honor of meeting Patriarch Thich Quang Do in 2018, and I was deeply impressed by his compassion and commitment to religious pluralism.



Professor the Lord Alton of Liverpool,
Member of the House of Lords, UK

Many will want to mark the passing of the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, by recalling his courageous opposition to authoritarian attempts to silence his calls for multi-party democracy, freedom of religion or belief and human rights. During the many times that the Communist authorities detained him over the past 45 years of his life he refused to be cowed or silenced – and that has inspired many people not to lose hope in their own struggle for fundamental rights and freedoms.

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>



Olivier Dupuis,
former Member of the European Parliament

A thought, a shared thought, for the Venerable Thich Quang Do. Yesterday, the Patriarch of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam soared to new, unvisited heights.

Thich Quang Do, upon whom Hanoi's Leninist dictatorship of Hanoi inflicted prisons, re-education camps and house arrest for more than forty years, leaves us in legacy his incredible spirit of Resistance, his keen sense of Politics and his uncompromising love of Liberty, the Rule of Law and Democracy. Thank you Thich Quang Do.



Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

Bishop Václav Malý,

Catholic Bishop, Prague, Czech Republic

I feel sincere regret and compassion due to the death of Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. He was a brave man advocating human dignity and supporting peaceful co-existence of people with various religious confessions.

**Representative of Christian Solidarity Worldwide,**

United Kingdom

I am so sorry to hear of the passing of the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do. His courage and commitment to freedom and human rights have been an inspiration to so many. He will be greatly missed. My thoughts are with everyone affected by this loss.



Rajiv Narayan,

*Director of Policy, International
Commission against the Death Penalty, Madrid*

I heard the news a few minutes ago on BBC news of the sad passing away of the Rev. Thich Quang Do. I felt very sad and yet inspired by his extraordinary fight and staunch activism and fight for the human dignity, for freedoms of expression, association, belief, religion in the face of extremely harsh punishment.

Vo Van Ai and Penelope, my thoughts and prayers go to you and your friends and supporters like Therese and Rafto Foundation for carrying on his struggle, believing and giving voice to his message which has such global resonance, especially today. As a saying in India goes, as long as the memory and the values of Rev. Thich Quang Do remains, he remains alive. And your efforts will continue to do so.

Wilson Ip,

Independent Human Rights Analyst

I am very saddened to hear about the passing of Ven Thich Quang Do. He is now in a place beyond earthly shackles. I hope his spirit continues to inspire those in Vietnam and around the world to continue the pursuit for true freedoms. Keep up the good

fight!

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Washington, DC, 25.2.2020 — The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom ([USCIRF](#)) mourned the passing of Patriarch Thích Quảng Độ, the leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). He was under effective house arrest at Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City from 2001 to late 2018, when he was able to flee to Tu Hieu pagoda, where he passed away on Saturday evening. USCIRF had advocated for Patriarch Thích Quảng Độ through the [Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project](#). A USCIRF delegation met with him in September 2019.

“This is an incredible loss for the people of Vietnam,” USCIRF Chair [Tony Perkins](#) stated. *“USCIRF urges the Vietnamese government to let UBCV members mourn their departed leader in peace.”*

“I had the honor of meeting Patriarch Thích Quảng Độ at his pagoda this past fall,” added Commissioner [Anurima Bhargava](#). *“With his quiet strength and grace, he fought for decades to preserve and promote religious freedom in Vietnam.”*