

UBCV leader Thích Quảng Độ returns safely to Saigon

PARIS, 28 November 2018 (VCHR - IBIB) – The International Buddhist Information Bureau (IBIB) and the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) are happy to announce that the Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) has returned safely to Saigon after almost two months in northern Vietnam. He arrived back on 22 November, and is now resting at the Từ Hiếu Pagoda, a temple belonging to the UBCV. Today marks the 90th birthday of the UBCV Patriarch, who has spent more than a third of his life under detention for his peaceful advocacy of religious freedom, democracy and human rights.

As we [previously reported](#), on 15 September 2018, Thích Quảng Độ was expelled from the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery by its Superior monk Thích Thanh Minh, who said his presence caused “*political and economic problems*” to the monastery. As soon as he left, his room was locked up and all his belongings, sutras and books were impounded.

In poor health and in a state of shock, Thích Quảng Độ accepted an invitation to stay at a temple dedicated to his ancestors in his home village at Tiên Hải district in the northern province of Thái Bình. Thích Quảng Độ told IBIB Director Võ Văn Ái by phone that he wished to visit his birth-place for the last time. He left Saigon by train on 5th October 2018.

On arriving in Thái Bình, however, Thích Quảng Độ soon realized he was under house arrest once again. His nephew, a former Security Police officer, forced Thích Quảng Độ’s assistant to return to Saigon and took control of all his communications. When Thích Quảng Độ expressed his wish to go home, the “family” found endless pretexts to prevent him leaving.

Thanks to the UBCV’s resourceful network, on 17 November, Thích Quảng Độ left the family temple, never to return. Under the pretext of visiting a nearby Buddhist Pagoda, they took him in secret by car back south, staying in Buddhists’ homes and temples on the way. UBCV followers told IBIB that Security Police were tracking them, often

arriving at places they had spent the night only hours after they had left. Despite all hardships, however, on 22 November, Thích Quảng Độ arrived at Từ Hiếu Pagoda safe and sound.

Vietnamese Buddhists all over the world are celebrating the return of the UBCV Patriarch, after weeks of concern about his safety and security. Thích Nguyên Lý, the Abbot of Từ Hiếu Temple, said that monks, nuns and lay followers had been flocking to the temple to pay their respects. Today, Pamela Pontius, Political Officer at the US Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, paid a visit to the UBCV Patriarch (*see photo above*).

IBIB sincerely thanks the US Embassy and Consulate, as well as all the other diplomatic missions and international organizations who have closely monitored Thích Quảng Độ's situation during these recent weeks, as well as during his long years under house arrest. As a Buddhist monk, he does not celebrate his birthday, but today is nevertheless a day of celebration for all who have followed the itinerary of this spiritual leader, scholar, prominent dissident and exceptional man. ---