

UBCV leaders Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do express sympathy to Queen Elizabeth II and Tony Blair following terrorist attacks in London

The **International Buddhist Information Bureau** (IBIB) has received a letter from Patriarch **Thich Huyen Quang** of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) to **Queen Elizabeth II** and from UBCV Deputy **Thich Quang Do** to British Prime Minister **Tony Blair** expressing their condolences for the deaths of innocent citizens in the terrorist attacks in London on 7th July 2005. The two UBCV leaders, who are detained under house arrest respectively at the Nguyen Thieu Monastery in Binh Dinh (Central Vietnam) and the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon, sent their letters via underground UBCV channels to Vo Van Ai, the UBCV's International spokesman and IBIB Director in Paris, who forwarded them to Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister Tony Blair today.

In their letters, Vietnam's two prominent Buddhist dissidents expressed their *"deepest sympathy and condolences to all the people of London who suffered so atrociously in the terrorist attacks on Thursday 7th July. We share your burden of sorrow and grief, and pray for you and your people in these dark days"*.

"These acts of destruction perpetrated against innocent citizens are both cruel and cowardly. Those who committed them have brought shame and dishonour to their cause. As Buddhists, we believe that hatred can never dissipate hatred. On the contrary, where hatred breeds, violence and suffering flourish and thrive. Only through compassion, tolerance and mutual understanding can solutions be found and problems be solved. We are deeply shocked by this unspeakable tragedy, and express our heartfelt sympathies to all the victims, their families and friends".

"In Vietnam, we have long experience of suffering, having endured decades of war and unabated political repression. We thus feel closely bound to all those who experience suffering in their lives. Today, many Vietnamese Buddhists, dissidents and members of other religions are persecuted simply for peacefully expressing their beliefs". Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do told Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister Tony Blair that they had both *"spent over two decades in detention"*, and were *"under house arrest"* as they wrote these letters, which they had sent to IBIB's Director *"with great difficulty... praying that [they] reach you safe and sound"*.

IBIB Director Vo Van Ai commended the UBCV's network for forwarding these letters despite stringent government restrictions and controls : *"Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do are denied the right to communicate with the "outside", their telephone and fax lines have been cut since the government crack-down in October*

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2003. Their message of compassion to the people of London reaches us today thanks to the determination and courage of UBCV Buddhists. It proves that all Hanoi's policies of repression cannot succeed in stifling the voice of independent Buddhism in Vietnam".