

The Vietnamese government and its Cao Dai sect harassed adherents of the authentic Cao Dai Church in Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province on August 10, 2019

To: Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations at Geneva
CH1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

(1) General Information

Summary: The government-created Cao Dai Sect (“1997 Cao Dai”), the government of Hưng Thạnh Commune, and the police of Tân Phước District (all are in Tiền Giang Province) harassed Mr. Phan Văn Dũng and at least 50 other adherents of the authentic Cao Dai Church (“1926 Cao Dai”) on August 10, 2019 when the authentic group participated in the ceremony “Ninth-Day Cycle Rite for the deceased” at the home of Mr. Dũng. The government wants to prevent independent Cao Dai adherents from practicing their faith by allowing rituals only after independent adherents agree to join the 1997 Sect. The government representative said that the ritual would have been authorized if it had been performed under the 1997 Sect’s purview in the government-approved Cao Dai temple. This official also prepared a report on the incident in which the owner of the house, Mr. Phan Văn Dũng, wrote his reason for not having the ritual performed at the local temple (which is run by the 1997 Sect): the 1926 Cao Dai Church is not the same religion as the 1997 Cao Dai Sect.

- *Did the incidents involve an individual or a group?* A group

- *Location of incident:* Hưng Quới Village, Hưng Thạnh Commune, Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province, Vietnam

- *Nationality and ethnic group of victims:* Vietnamese citizenship, Kinh (dominant ethnic group)

- *Does national policy require registration for religious activities? If yes, what is the current status of the group?* Yes, required. Although the Cao Dai Church (established in 1926 before Communism even existed in Vietnam) is not banned in Vietnam following North Vietnam’s takeover of South Vietnam, the Communist government established a separate Cao Dai denomination in 1997 to infiltrate and oppress the authentic Cao Dai Church, backed by police and government agencies. This sect and the authentic Cao Dai Church have major doctrinal differences. The Communist-controlled sect has taken over the Holy See of the authentic Cao Dai Church (“1926 Cao Dai”) and manipulated the international community into thinking that it represents the authentic Church. In July 2019 the U.S. Commerce Department dismissed the 1997 Sect’s claim to the Cao Dai Church’s official name and seal, recognizing that the sect is not the same as the original Cao Dai Church (established in 1926).

(2) Identity of the Persons Concerned

Provide information below for each individual: Please see Addendum 1.

Nationality: All are Vietnamese citizens.

Denomination: All are adherents of the 1926 Cao Dai (authentic) Church

Persons authorized to represent: All authorized the Junior Sacerdotal Council of the authentic Cao Dai Church or Boat People SOS to represent them.

(3) Information on the alleged violation(s)

- *Date and time (approximate if not known exactly):*

August 10, 2019 - Phan Văn Dũng, Hưng Quới Village, Hưng Thạnh Commune.

At approximately 1:15 PM, Mr. Phan Văn Dũng and his guests were conducting the ritual “Ninth-Day Cycle Rite” for the deceased Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Lễ when officials from the People’s Committee of the commune and police officers from the Security Branch of the Police of Tân Phước District disrupted the ritual. The government group came to stop the religious activity under the guise of needing to discuss issues with the homeowner. The intruders behaved loudly and obnoxiously, and then the Fatherland Front Committee vice-chairman wrote up the incident in an official report in which the owner of the house, Mr. Phan Văn Dũng, wrote his reason for not having the ritual performed at the local temple (which is run by the 1997 Sect): the 1926 Cao Dai Church is not the same religion as the 1997 Cao Dai Sect (Exhibit 1 in Addendum 2).

Perpetrators List 1:

1. Ms. Võ Thị Hồng Tươi of the People's Committee of Hưng Thạnh Commune.
2. Mr. Phạm Hoài Hân, chairman of the People's Council of Hưng Thạnh Commune.
3. Mr. Đoàn Thanh Tùng, vice-chairman, Fatherland Front Committee of Hưng Thạnh Commune
4. Mr. Huỳnh Chí Thiệt, police officer of the Security Branch of Tân Phước District police.

Which indications exist that the victim(s) has been targeted because of his/her religion or belief? It is clear that the government's motive has been to deny freedom of religion to Cao Dai adherents who chose to follow their traditional faith.

-Identification of the alleged perpetrator(s), name(s) if known and/or function, suspected motive: see list.

-Are the perpetrator(s) known to the victim? Yes.

-Are State agents or non-State actors believed to be responsible for the alleged violation? State agents.

-If the perpetrators are believed to be State agents, please specify (police, military, agents of security services, unit to which they belong, rank and functions, etc.), and indicate why they are believed to be responsible: Please see the list of perpetrators in the previous section.

(4). Steps taken by the victim, his/her family, or anyone else on his/her behalf?

- Please indicate if complaints have been filed, when, by whom, and before which State authorities or competent bodies (i.e., police, prosecutor, court, etc.). No.

- Were there any other steps taken? None.

- Steps taken by the authorities: None.

- Indicate whether or not, to your knowledge, there have been investigations by the State authorities; if so, what kind of investigations? Please indicate progress and status of these investigations and which other measures have been taken: None.

- In case of complaints by the victim or his family, how have those authorities or other competent bodies dealt with them? What has been the outcome of those proceedings? Not applicable.

(5). Identity of the person or institution submitting this form:

- Boat People SOS, using information provided by: Family name: Gia, Given name: Long

Email: info@bpsos.org or tien1bpsos@gmail.com

- Individual or organization authorized to represent: BPSOS or the Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Third Amnesty of God (Third Amnesty of God is the Cao Dai Church)

- Status: BPSOS & Junior Sacerdotal Council are non-profit organizations

Junior Sacerdotal Council contact:

Family name: Đỗ; Middle name: Minh; Given name: Đức - deputy head of External Affairs Committee, Junior Sacerdotal Council, Houston, Texas, USA; Email: mustang1983@gmail.com;

Do you act with knowledge and on behalf of the victim(s)? Yes.

Please state whether you want your identity to be kept confidential: Yes for Gia Long, no for Boat People SOS or the Junior Sacerdotal Council.

Date you are submitting this form: August 13, 2019.

Addendum 1 Identity of the Persons Concerned

Nationality: All are Vietnamese citizens.

Denomination: All are adherents of the 1926 Cao Dai (authentic) Church

Persons authorized to represent: All authorized Boat People SOS and the Junior Sacerdotal Council of the Third Amnesty of God.

1. Family name: Phan Middle name: Văn Given name: Dũng Gender: Male
Address: Hưng Quới Village, Hưng Thạnh Commune, Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province
Birth date: 1964
2. Family name: Võ Middle name: none Given name: Kim Liên. Gender: Female
Address: Hưng Quới Village, Hưng Thạnh Commune, Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province.
Birth date: 1964

3. Family name: Bùi Middle name: none Given name: Kim Trâm Gender: Female (daughter of the deceased person)

Address: Phú Thạnh Village, Hưng Điền Commune, Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province.

Birth date: 1957.

4. Family name: Trần Middle name: Kim Given name: Xuyên Gender: Male

Address: Hưng Điền Village, Hưng Thạnh Commune, Tân Phước District, Tiền Giang Province

Birth date: 28/11/1956

5. Family name: Võ Middle name: Văn Given name: Lực Gender: Male

Address: Mỹ Thạnh Commune, Thủ Thừa District, Long An Province

Birth date: 1964

6. Family name: Trần Middle name: Ngọc Given name: Sương Gender: Male

Address: Neighborhood 2, Ward 4, Gò Công Town, Tiền Giang Province.

Birth date: 1960.

7. Family name: Nguyễn Middle name: none Given name: Hồng Dung Gender: Female

Address: Neighborhood 2, Ward 4, Gò Công Town, Tiền Giang Province.

Birth date: 1964

8. Family name: Nguyễn Middle name: none Given name: Hồng Phượng Gender: Female

Address: Quan Khương Village, Quơn Long Commune, Chợ Gạo District, Tiền Giang Province.

Birth date: 1975

9. Family name: Phạm Middle name: Văn Given name: Tùng Gender: Male

Address: Neighborhood 4, Ward 4, Gò Công Town, Tiền Giang Province.

Birth date: 1972

Addendum 2 Evidence

Video clip showing the government group harassing Mr. Phan Văn Dũng and his guests.

<https://m.facebook.com/100004628117586/videos/1679510002213254/?t=6>

Identification of perpetrators in the video clip:

1. Ms. Võ Thị Hồng Tươi of the People's Committee of Hưng Thạnh Commune: in green coat.
2. Mr. Phạm Hoài Hân, chairman of the People's Council of Hưng Thạnh Commune: in pink, long-sleeved shirt.
3. Mr. Đoàn Thanh Tùng, vice-chairman, Fatherland Front Committee of Hưng Thạnh Commune: in white shirt, writing the government report of the incident.
4. Mr. Huỳnh Chí Thiện, police officer of the Security Branch of Tân Phước District police: in striped polo shirt.



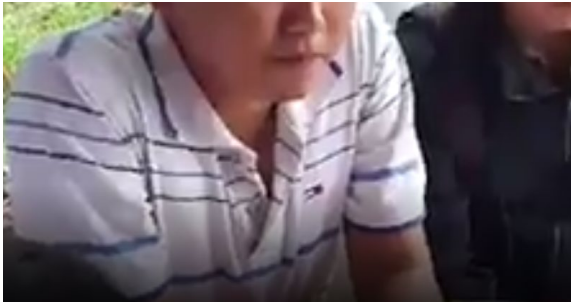


Image of the official report prepared by the intruding officials on August 10, 2019:

UỶ BAN NHÂN DÂN XÃ CÔNG HOÀ XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Hưng Thịnh
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Bức báo
Đoàn Đình Việt báo với ông Phan Văn Dũng

I. Thái độ:

- + Ông chú Võ Văn Hồng Tuấn - PC, UBND xã.
- + Ông chú Phan Văn Hùng - CT, HĐND
- + Ông chú Đoàn Thanh Tùng - PCT, UBND
- + Ông chú Nguyễn Chí Thành - An ninh huyện.

II. Nội dung:

Đoàn Đình Việt báo cháu Phan Văn Dũng về việc cúng cho cúng với bà Nguyễn Thị Lễ theo đạo Cao Đài, 1926.

Ý kiến của chú Dũng:

- Tại sao không tổ chức cúng cho cô Thắm (Thị) (Thị) trong lòng ý kiến của cô chú đạo Cao Đài, 1926 không cúng chú Phan Văn Văn Cao Đài Thắm (Thị) (Thị) trong lòng.
- Bà chú Phan Văn Hùng cúng cho.

Bức báo báo thủ tục 13 giờ 40 phút cúng ngày.

ĐẠI DIỆN ỦY BAN NHÂN DÂN

Người viết: Nguyễn Văn Hùng

Phan Văn Dũng

Đoàn Thanh Tùng

Exhibit 1: Government report signed by one of the victims (whose house was used for the ritual) and Mr. Đoàn Thanh Tùng, vice-chairman, Fatherland Front Committee of Hưng Thạnh Commune (he wrote the report on the spot).