



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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31 March 2003

### VNM41310.E

Vietnam: Treatment of members of the Theravada Sangha Buddhist sect belonging to the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No information on the treatment of members of the Theravada Buddhist Sangha sect belonging to the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The United Kingdom's assessment of Vietnam states that Theravada Buddhism is practiced in southern Vietnam by the Khmer people (October 2002), and the United State's *International Religious Freedom Report 2002* maintains that the "Khmer Theravada Buddhists are allowed a somewhat separate identity [from] the [state-sanctioned] Central Buddhist Church" (7 Sept. 2002, Sec. 11). Although no further mention is given to the relationship between the Theravada Buddhists and the Central Buddhist Church in the report on religious freedom, it adds that religious sects without official state recognition are considered illegal in Vietnam and operate "at their own risk" (7 Sept. 2002).

According to *Human Rights Watch World Report 2003*, "repression against the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) continued during [2002]." Several reports discuss the government's tight supervision of UBCV leaders Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do (AFP 23 Jan. 2003; *ibid.* 8 July 2002; HRW 2003; ABC Radio Australia 12 Feb. 2003). Thich Huyen Quang, who has been under house arrest since 1982, stated that "'UBCV leaders are in prison or house arrest and are impeded from accomplishing their mission'" (AFP 23 Jan. 2003).

The General Secretary of the Communist Party, in a plenum of the Party's Central Committee in January 2003, stated that

all development policies and plans for ethnic minorities and religious groups should be scrupulously executed so that all religious, non-religious and ethnic groups could be rallied round the Party to achieve national unity. ... [He] also warned of the risk of bad elements taking advantage of special policies for various ethnicities, religions and beliefs to undermine the Vietnamese State ... (*Viet Nam News* 23 Jan. 2003).

The committee outlined incentives and legal measures intended to advance national unity within religious communities, including "guiding religious groups to nurturing external relations in line with Party and State policies and recruiting more cadres and Party members from among religious followers" (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### References

ABC Radio Australia. 12 February 2003. "Freedom Call for Vietnam's Jailed Buddhist Leaders." <[http://abc.net.au/asiapacific/news/GoAsiaPacificBNA\\_782306.htm](http://abc.net.au/asiapacific/news/GoAsiaPacificBNA_782306.htm)> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2003]

Agence France Presse (AFP). 23 January 2003. "Dissident Buddhist Leader Urges End to Repression in Vietnam." (NEXIS)

\_\_\_\_\_. 8 July 2002. "NGO Cites Arbitrary Rights Violations in Vietnam." (Global News Wire/NEXIS)

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2003. *Human Rights Watch World Report 2003*. "Vietnam." <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k3/asia9.html>> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2003]

*International Religious Freedom Report 2002*. 7 September 2002. "Vietnam." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13916.htm>> [Accessed 27 Mar. 2003]

United Kingdom. October 2002. Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office. "Vietnam Country Assessment." <<http://194.203.40.90/default.asp?PagelD=3306>> [Accessed 14 Mar. 2003]

*Viet Nam News* (VNA) [Hanoi]. 23 January 2003. "Party Leader Deems 'Great National Unity' Platform for Future Growth." <<http://vietnamnews.vnagency.com.vn/2003-01/22/Stories/01.htm>> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2003]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

IRB Databases

LEXIS/NEXIS

Unsuccessful attempt to obtain information from the Unified Buddhist Church in Plum Village, France.

#### **Internet sites, including:**

Amnesty International

BuddhaSasana

Free Vietnam Alliance

Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

Plum Village

Vietnam Human Rights Network

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