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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2018

Dear Ambassador Kritenbrink,

I write with grave concern regarding the expulsion of the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), from the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon.

Since 1975, Patriarch Thich Quang Do has been arrested and imprisoned multiple times for his leadership and involvement with the UBCV as well as his advocacy efforts for religious freedom. He has been jailed numerous times for leading nonviolent protests against the Vietnamese government's repressive policies. Through all of that, the Patriarch continues to face heavy police surveillance and restrictions on his movement and activities. The Thanh Minh Monastery belongs to the State sponsored Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and the Patriarch was invited to live there by the monastery's Superior monk Thich Thanh Minh. Despite the Vietnamese government's pressure for him to move, the Patriarch has refused to leave unless he was asked by Abbot Thich Thanh Minh.

It was reported that on September 15th, 2018, Abbot Thich Thanh Minh asked Patriarch Thich Quang Do to leave because his presence was causing political and economic problems for the monastery. The Patriarch left the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery immediately after that and was only able to take with him three Buddhist monk robes. From September 15th to October 5th, Patriarch Thich Quang Do was "homeless" and had to stay at various monasteries throughout Saigon. On October 5th, the Patriarch boarded a train back to his ancestral hometown in Thai Binh Province, northern Vietnam. His current health and well-being are unknown and communications with the Patriarch have been cut off. I am deeply concerned with Patriarch Thich Quang Do's current conditions.

As you know, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 16 times and is respected by human rights leaders around the world for his advocacy on religious freedom. As a leader of the UBCV, the Patriarch was persecuted for opposing the creation of the state-sponsored "Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam," the only Buddhist organization established and recognized by the Communist government of Vietnam. In April 2018, I adopted the Patriarch as a prisoner of conscience through the Tom Lantos Commission's Defending Freedom Project.

Patriarch Thich Quang Do, who is 91 years old, is in poor health and needs medical attention. He is among Vietnam's oldest human rights activists.

I am requesting that you, along with the U.S. Mission in Vietnam, visits the Patriarch Thich Quang Do in his current location at the earliest time possible to determine his condition and ensure his well-being. I also would like to request the U.S. Mission to establish a line of communication with the Patriarch given the latest developments.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress