



Amnesty International

Group 524

February 2018



Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 20 – 7:00 p.m. – Providence Heights

Vietnam: Thich Quang Do Receives Cards from Massachusetts Students

Since the spring of 2010, our group has been working to gain freedom for **Thich Quang Do**, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. On this case, we have received guidance and inspiration from our Amnesty colleagues of Group 56 (Lexington, MA), who have been working on the case since 2002. Kathy Herbst coordinates our group's efforts, working with Al Jacobson of Group 56.

Late last year, Group 56 began a project to involve local high school students in creating cards, letters, and drawings to send to Thich Quang Do. The packet of greetings from Lexington was mailed to Paris, where Penelope Faulkner of the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) sent them on to Thich Quang Do.

In late January came the wonderful news that Thich Quang Do had received the greetings! VCHR issued a long press release, illustrated with photos showing Thich Quang Do reading the messages. This was a wonderful accomplishment for Group 56 and the local students! See Page 4 for the first part of the press release. We're saving the second part for March!

Turkey: Amnesty International Leader Remains in Prison

Taner Kilic, the board chair of Amnesty Turkey, has been held in pretrial detention since July, facing phony terrorism charges. On Page 2, we have a model letter calling for his release. Several other updates can be found on Page 3.

February 20th at Providence Heights

When we get together next week at Providence Heights, we will have lots of things to talk about. There will be petitions to sign, and greetings to send to prisoners of conscience. As always, Kathy will bring a greeting that we can sign and send to Thich Quang Do.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Providence Heights

9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



Contact John Warren (jf.warren@verizon.net or 412-766-2506) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA website (www.amnestyusa.org) or the website of Amnesty International Group 39 (amnestypgh.org).

Turkey: Model Letter in Behalf of Taner Kilic

Eight months after his arrest on trumped-up charges of terrorism, Taner Kilic continues to be held in pretrial detention. Shortly after his arrest last July, ten other human rights activists were arrested on similar charges. Those individuals have been released from pretrial detention, but the charges against them remain.

Taner Kilic was a founding member of Amnesty in Turkey, and has served as its board chair since 2014. He is an attorney, and in that role he has been a strong advocate for the rights of refugees.

Mr Bekir Bozdag
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanligi
06659 Ankara, Turkey



Dear Minister:

I am contacting you out of great concern for **Taner Kiliç**, the current board chair of Amnesty International Turkey. As I am certain you are well aware, Mr. Kilic has been detained in pretrial custody since July 2017.

The charges that your government has brought against them – accusations of acting to aid various terrorist organizations – are bizarre and obviously fabricated.

It is clear that he has been imprisoned solely because he committed the “crime” of standing up for human rights.

I urge you to drop all charges against **Taner Kiliç**. He should be released from detention, immediately and unconditionally.

cc: Ambassador Serdar Kiliç
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008

Vietnam: Update on Formosa Steel

The prisoner on the right is **Hoang Duc Binh**. Last week he was sentenced to 14 years in prison for the “crime” of livestreaming a group of fishermen who were on their way to file a lawsuit against Formosa Steel for the toxic spill which destroyed their livelihood.

For details, here is the article from the *Bangkok Post*.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1408458/vietnam-jails-activist-for-livestreaming-pollution-march>



We should also note that in late January, Formosa Steel announced plans to double the capacity of its steel plant.

Bahrain: Court Upholds Two-Year Sentence for Human Rights Defender Nabeel Rajab

Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was arrested in June 2016 for criticizing the government in interviews and online postings. For the first nine months of his pretrial detention, he was held in solitary confinement. He was subsequently sentenced to two years in prison. Other charges now pending against him could add 15 more years.

Our group has sent letters and petitions on this case since the summer of 2016. At this month’s meeting, we will have another petition to sign. For details, see the update from Amnesty: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/urgent-action-update-human-rights-defenders-appealed-sentence-upheld-bahrain-ua-249-14/>

Washington: Human Rights Watch Decries U.S. Retreat on Human Rights

This week the influential journal, *Foreign Affairs*, published a lengthy commentary by Sarah Margon, the Washington director for Human Rights Watch. The article provides a comprehensive review of the U.S. human rights record under Donald Trump. It is titled ‘Giving Up the High Ground – America’s Retreat on Human Rights’.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/13/giving-high-ground-americas-retreat-human-rights>

Vietnam: Press Release from Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

To do justice to this press release, and to the project it describes, we're presenting it here as a set of screen snapshots. If you would like to view it online, here is the link:

<http://queme.org/en/massachusetts-high-school-students-speak-thich-quang-do/?v=7516fd43adaa>

Massachusetts High School Students speak out for Thich Quang Do

2 weeks ago 560 Views

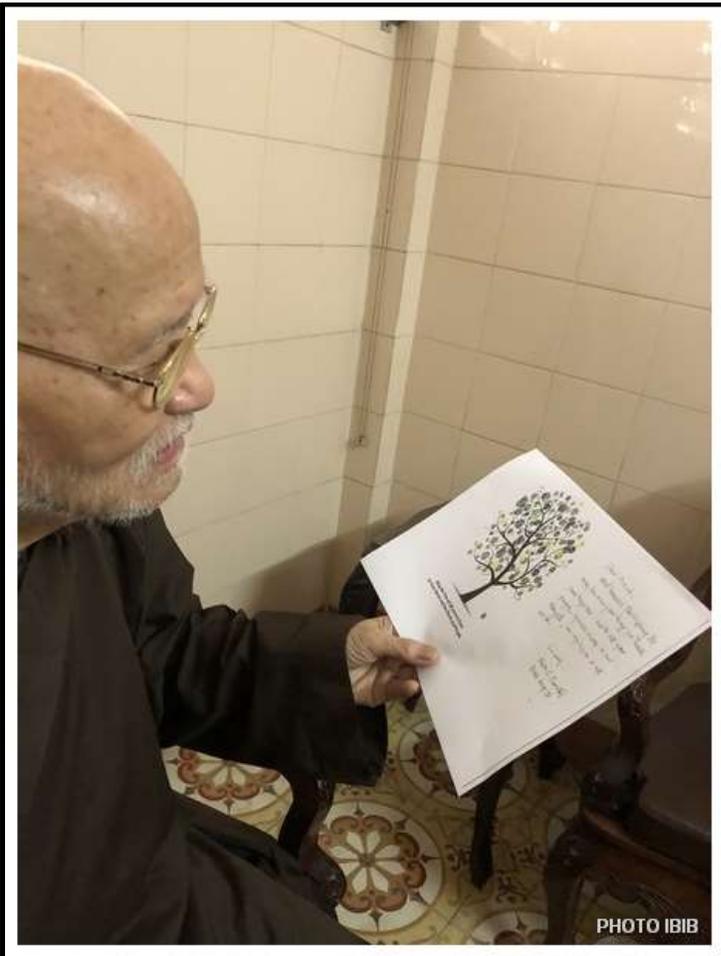


Vietnam: Press Release from Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (continued)

PARIS, 29th January 2018 (VCHR) – The Most Venerable **Thích Quảng Độ**, prominent dissident and Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) received an unexpected gift today at the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City where he is under house arrest – a packet of cards, letters and drawings from high school students and members of the local community in Lexington, Massachusetts (USA) expressing support for his lifelong efforts for religious freedom and human rights. Since Thích Quảng Độ's communications are monitored and censored by the communist authorities, the letters were sent through the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights and the International Buddhist Information Bureau to ensure that they reached Thích Quang Độ safe and sound.

“Hanoi has detained and isolated Thích Quảng Độ for decades, hoping that the world would forget him” said VCHR President Võ Văn Ái. ***“These touching messages prove that their heartless policy has failed. Thích Quảng Độ’s engagement for religious freedom and human rights has inspired young people across the globe. Their words are a source of hope and encouragement for all human rights defenders and civil society activists in Vietnam”***.

These messages of international solidarity for Thích Quảng Độ arrive at a time when human rights defenders, civil society activists and members of religious communities are suffering intense repression under one of the fiercest assaults in recent years on freedom of expression, association, assembly and religion in Vietnam.

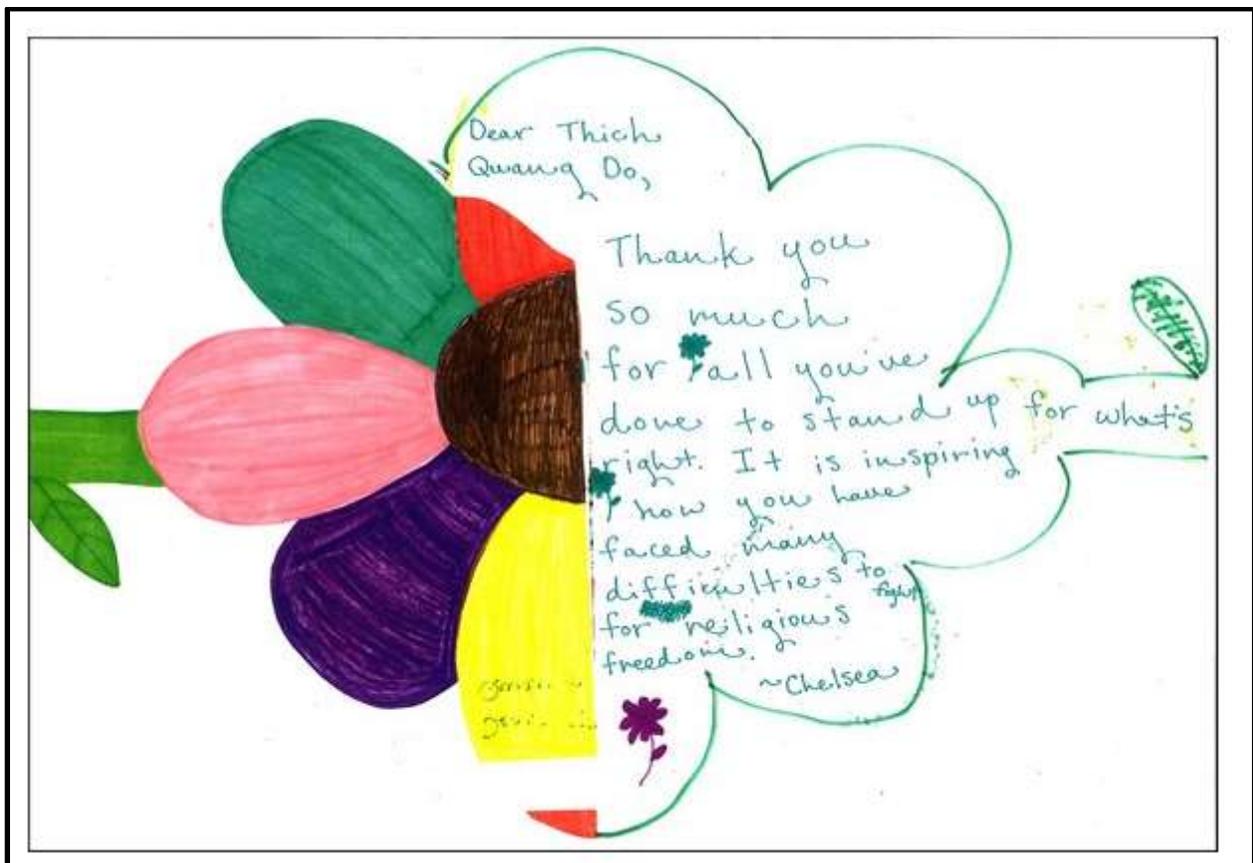


Vietnam: Press Release from Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (continued)

Thích Quảng Độ asked Võ Văn Ái to thank the students of Lexington High School, members of Amnesty International and community groups for their kind gesture. Below are extracts from some of the messages:

Lucie Nolden: *"Dear Thích Quảng Độ, I am a student in the United States and I am writing to you to express my admiration for all of the work you have done. Your fight for religious freedom and human rights has been inspirational. It is awful that you have been imprisoned for the amazing work you have done. I just wanted to let you know that so many people support and admire you here, at my school, in my country and around the world. We will not rest until human rights abuses everywhere have ended and each person is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. Thank you so much for everything you have done."*

Aradhna Johnson: *"Dear Mr. Quảng Độ, Thank you for all you have done for freedom of religion. The work you have done has not gone unnoticed. People will remember your bravery, passion and faith for ages. It is people like you who make a difference. It is people like you who inspire others to fight for what they believe in. Your dreams are shared with people all around the world, dreams of peace, equality and progress. All the work you have done has made a difference in our world and will continue to impact humanity through the ages."*



To be continued in our March newsletter!