



Amnesty International

Group 524

October 2018



Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 16 – 7:00 p.m. – Providence Heights

Good Horrific News from Turkey

In last month's newsletter, the section header above was 'Good News from Turkey!', referring to the release from prison of **Taner Kilic**, the chair of Amnesty International's Turkish section. This month, of course, the 'Horrible' reference is to the presumed murder of Jamal Khashoggi, the prominent journalist who has not been seen since he entered the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul on Tuesday, October 2nd. See Pages 7 – 8 for more on this.

Vietnam: Thich Quang Do Expelled from Monastery in Saigon

Since 2003, Supreme Patriarch **Thich Quang Do** has lived under house arrest in a monastery in Saigon. Several weeks ago, the monk in charge of the monastery – apparently under pressure from the Vietnamese government – ordered Thich Quang Do to leave at once, with little more than the clothes he was wearing.

We have just learned about this development. In this issue, we have an October 8th report from the Paris-based Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, and also a letter written on October 12th by Congressman Alan Lowenthal, urging the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, Daniel Kritenbrink, to visit Thich Quang Do as soon as possible. See Pages 2 – 4.

Write for Human Rights 2018: Eleven Cases Available

We have no room in this issue for a feature about the Nobel Peace Prize winners who were announced in early October – **Denis Mukwege** and **Nadia Murad**. Same thing goes for the decision by the state of Washington to abolish the death penalty.

We do, however, have room for a letter-writing opportunity, using one of the 11 cases from Amnesty's global 2018 Write for Rights effort. See Pages 5 – 6. Right here in Pittsburgh, Group 39's Write for Human Rights event will take place on **Wednesday, December 12**. As always, it will be held at Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside. More details next month!

Amnesty International Group 524

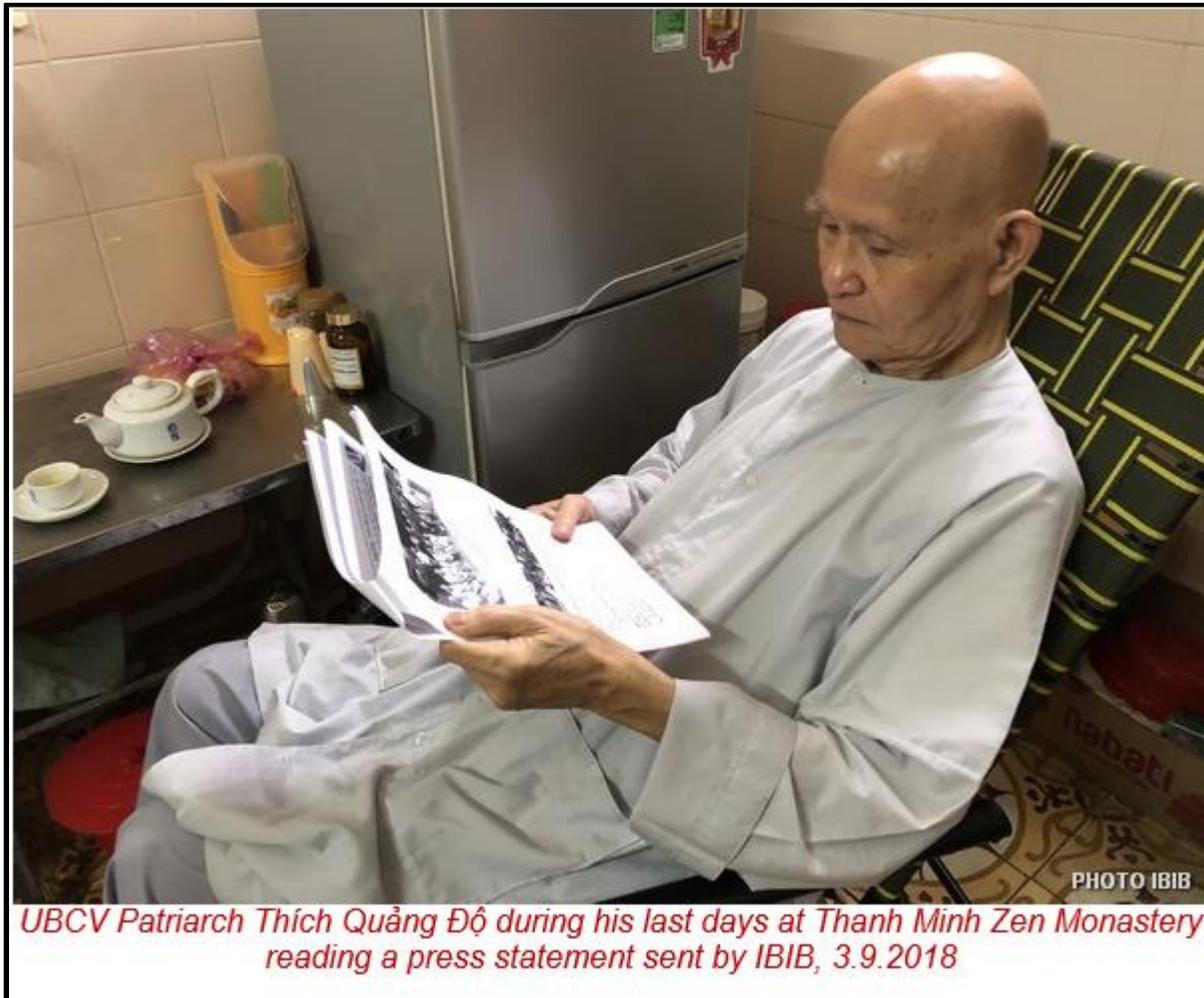
Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Location: Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



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).

Vietnam: Thich Quang Do Expelled from Monastery in Saigon

This photograph, from the website of the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, was taken on September 3rd, less than two weeks before Thich Quang Do was expelled from the monastery.



Our case coordinator, Kathy Herbst, got in touch with Penelope Faulkner of VCHR. By email from Paris, Penelope sent us some additional information about this situation. At our meeting, we will go over her full email, but here are a couple of points:

- Thich Quang Do was deeply shocked when his old friend, Thích Thanh Minh, expelled him from the Saigon monastery.
- At the place where Thich Quang Do is staying in Thai Binh, he is effectively in the hands of the Vietnamese government.

See Page 3 for the VCHR press release. Alan Lowenthal's letter to the ambassador is on Page 4. At our meeting, we will sign a letter to Congressman Lowenthal, thanking him for sending that letter. Next month, we will send our own letter to the ambassador.



Vietnam: Press Release from Vietnam Committee for Human Rights

The VCHR press release also included background information on the life of Thich Quang Do. This link includes that section of the press release:

<http://queme.org/en/thich-quang-do-expelled-from-the-thanh-minh-zen-monastery/?v=7516fd43adaa>

UBCV Patriarch Thich Quang Do Expelled from Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon

PARIS, 8 October (VCHR - IBIB) – The International Buddhist Information Bureau informs the international community with deep concern that Buddhist dissident and Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) Thich Quang Do boarded a train for the northern province of Thái Bình at 9:00am on Friday 5th October 2018 after being expelled from the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon.

According to IBIB’s information, Thich Quang Do was forced to leave the monastery, following pressure from the monastery’s Superior monk Thích Thanh Minh. On 15th September 2018, Thích Thanh Minh “invited” Thich Quang Do to leave on the grounds that his presence caused political and economic problems to the monastery.

Thich Quang Do left immediately, taking with him only a small suit-case with three monk’s robes. When his assistant came back later in the day to collect his sutras, books and belongings, Thích Thanh Minh had locked the staircase leading to his room and prevented the young monk from taking anything. Since then, Thich Quang Do, 91, moved from one pagoda to another in Saigon with no permanent place to stay.

In fact, Thanh Minh Zen Monastery, where the UBCV Patriarch has been under house arrest without charge since 2003, does not belong to the UBCV but to the state-sponsored Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS). Because Thích Thanh Minh was an old friend, Thich Quang Do went to live there after 1975 when his own pagoda was confiscated by the State.

Despite house arrest, Thich Quang Do continued to speak out for religious freedom and human rights. Over the past two years, the authorities have stepped up pressure to move Thich Quang Do away from the monastery to the state-sponsored Vinh Nghiêm Pagoda in Saigon, or to a pagoda in northern Vietnam. The UBCV Patriarch said he refused to move out unless Thích Thanh Minh asked him himself – which finally happened on 15.9.2018.

In a phone conversation with IBIB Director Võ Văn Ái, the UBCV Patriarch said he had decided to go to his home village in Tien Hai district in Thái Bình, northern Vietnam.

**“Do not worry. I will never abandon the UBCV. Patriarch is a title for life!
Until my very last breath, I will defend the UBCV, and you must do so too!”**

IBIB is nevertheless concerned for the situation of this eminent Buddhist leader, who has paid such a high price for his nonviolent advocacy of religious freedom, human rights, and democracy, and whose access to communications, health care and visits from UBCV followers will undoubtedly be limited in this remote northern province.



Vietnam: Letter from Representative Alan Lowenthal to Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink

ALAN LOWENTHAL
47TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND MINERAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND ENVIRONMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME



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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

Write for Rights 2018: Eleven Cases from Around the World

Amnesty has selected 11 cases for action at Write for Rights events this year. December 10th will be the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. All over the globe, most of the events will take place on or near that date. Here in Pittsburgh, Group 39 will hold its Write for Human Rights event on Wednesday, December 12, from 6 to 9, at Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside. As always, our group will take part in the event, and it will take the place of our group's December meeting.

Here are the countries represented in this year's case list. It is worth noting that the subject of the Vietnam case is Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, also known as Me Nam ("Mother Mushroom"). We wrote letters in her behalf last month.

- Brazil
- India
- Iran
- Kenya
- Kyrgyzstan
- Morocco
- South Africa
- Ukraine
- United States
- Venezuela
- Vietnam

Write for Rights 2018: Support Human Rights Defender in Venezuela



Geraldine Chacón always wanted to defend other people. Aged nine, she dreamed of being a lawyer. At 14, she stood for her local youth government. And at university, she started a network of Amnesty International activists pushing for change. As her mother says, "Any injustice she saw, she fought against." This passion inspired her to work for an organization which empowers young people in some of the poorest areas of Caracas, her home city. But then, in February 2018, this young, enthusiastic member of her community was arrested in her home by armed officials.

The authorities wrongly linked her with "resistance" groups that they accused of organizing violent anti-government demonstrations. In fact, her persecution is part of a wider government crackdown on those who criticize the authorities and stand up for human rights during the current Venezuelan crisis.

After four months jailed in appalling conditions, Geraldine was conditionally released in June 2018. But she can't leave the country and her case is still open – so she could be arrested again at any time for no reason. She and many peaceful activists in Venezuela face daily intimidation, just for trying to make their country a better place.

Tell Venezuela to stop harassing Geraldine now.

See the next page for a model letter on this case.



Write for Rights 2018: Support Human Rights Defender in Venezuela (continued)

The photograph and text on the preceding page came from the case sheet booklet prepared by AIUSA. The full 22-page booklet (a 17 MB PDF file) can be found via this link:

<https://write.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AllLowResCaseSheets-1.pdf>

For ten of the eleven cases, the case sheet includes an address for mailing a note of support and encouragement to the individual, but that information was missing from the page on this case.

The model letter below came from a Word file that can be downloaded from this page:

<https://write.amnestyusa.org/instructions/>

According to the case sheet, this letter is directed to the embassy in Washington, because of problems with the postal service in Venezuela.

Fiscal General de la República
C/O Embassy of Venezuela
1099 30th Street, NW
Washington DC 20007

Señor Fiscal General / Mr. Attorney General:

I urge you to formally close the case against **Geraldine Chacón** and grant her unconditional freedom. She is a peaceful human rights defender who has not advocated violence at any stage.

Geraldine was arrested, detained in appalling conditions for four months and intimidated, solely on the basis of her peaceful work with young people in Caracas.

Though conditionally released in June 2018, she cannot leave the country and could be arrested again at any time, for any reason. A passionate and active young member of society should be celebrated, not silenced.

Yours sincerely,

Saudi Arabia and Washington: Murder of Jamal Khashoggi

Since we had to revise the newsletter to accommodate the news about Thich Quang Do, it was also possible to revise this section to include more current material. Here are several links.

There is an online action concerning this case at the main Amnesty website:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/saudi-arabia-jamal-khashoggi/>

Here is a collection of excerpts from columns Jamal Khashoggi wrote for the Washington Post.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/10/06/read-jamal-khashoggis-columns-for-the-washington-post/?utm_term=.0eb0b0275910

This is a remembrance of Jamal Khashoggi written by Hatice Cengiz, his fiancée.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/13/opinion/jamal-khashoggi-saudi-arabia-fiancee-mbs-murder.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

This commentary by Nicholas Kristof was published in the New York Times on October 13th.

If a Prince Murders a Journalist, That's Not a Hiccup

The reports about Jamal Khashoggi, the missing Saudi journalist and *Washington Post* contributor, whom I've known for more than 15 years, grow steadily more sickening.

Turkey claims to have audiotape of Saudi interrogators torturing Jamal and killing him in the Saudi Consulate. None of this is confirmed, and we still don't know exactly what happened; we all pray that Jamal will still reappear. But increasingly it seems that the crown prince, better known as M.B.S., orchestrated the torture, assassination and dismemberment of an American-based journalist, using diplomatic premises in a NATO country.

That is monstrous, and it's compounded by the tepid response from Washington. President Trump is already rejecting the idea of responding to such a murder by cutting off weapons sales. Trump sounds as if he believes that the consequence of such an assassination should be a hiccup and then business as usual.

Frankly, it's a disgrace that Trump administration officials and American business tycoons enabled and applauded M.B.S., as he imprisoned business executives, kidnapped Lebanon's prime minister, rashly created a crisis with Qatar, and went to war in Yemen to create what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis there. Some eight million Yemenis on the edge of starvation there don't share this bizarre view that M.B.S. is a magnificent reformer.

Trump has expressed "great confidence" in M.B.S. and said that he and King Salman "know exactly what they are doing." Jared Kushner wooed M.B.S. and built a close relationship with him — communicating privately without involving State Department experts — in ways that certainly assisted M.B.S. in his bid to consolidate power for himself. The bipartisan cheers from Washington, Silicon Valley and Wall Street fed his recklessness. If he could be feted after kidnapping a Lebanese prime minister and slaughtering Yemeni children, why expect a fuss for murdering a mere journalist?

M.B.S. knows how to push Americans' buttons, speaking about reform and playing us like a fiddle. His willingness to sound accepting of Israel may also be one reason Trump and so many Americans were willing to embrace M.B.S. even as he was out of control at home.



Saudi Arabia and Washington: Murder of Jamal Khashoggi (continued)

In the end, M.B.S. played Kushner, Trump and his other American acolytes for suckers. The White House boasted about \$110 billion in arms sales, but nothing close to that came through. Saudi Arabia backed away from Trump's Middle East peace deal. Financiers salivated over an initial public offering for Aramco, the state-owned oil company, but that keeps getting delayed.

[Note: Trump's figure of \$110 billion is a phony number. See link below for details.]

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/11/trumps-billion-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-still-fake/?utm_term=.ac3406826ec4

The crackdown on corruption is an example of M.B.S.'s manipulation and hypocrisy. It sounded great, but M.B.S. himself has purchased a \$300 million castle in France, and a \$500 million yacht — and he didn't buy them by scrimping on his government salary.

In fairness, he did allow women to drive. But he also imprisoned the women's rights activists who had been campaigning for the right to drive. Saudi Arabia even orchestrated the detention abroad of a women's rights activist, Loujain al-Hathloul, and her return in handcuffs. She turned 29 in a Saudi jail cell in July, and her marriage has ended. She, and not the prince who imprisons her, is the heroic reformer.

Just last month in London, unidentified Saudi men, one wearing an earpiece, attacked a Saudi dissident named Ghanem al-Dosari, who has mocked M.B.S. as "the tubby teddy bear." As they punched Dosari, they cursed him for criticizing the Saudi royal family.

"M.B.S.'s message to Saudis is clear: I will shut you up no matter where you are, and no matter what laws I have to break to do it," Sarah Leah Whitson of Human Rights Watch told me.

The crown prince showed his sensitivity and unpredictability in August when Canada's foreign ministry tweeted concern about the jailing of Saudi women's rights activists. Saudi Arabia went nuts, canceling flights, telling 8,300 Saudi students to leave Canada, expelling the Canadian ambassador and withdrawing investments. All for a tweet.

Western companies should back out of M.B.S.'s Future Investment Initiative conference later this month. That includes you, Mastercard, McKinsey, Credit Suisse, Siemens, HSBC, BCG, EY, Bain and Deloitte, all listed on the conference website as partners of the event.

We need an international investigation, perhaps overseen by the United Nations, of what happened to Jamal. In the United States, we also must investigate whether Saudis bought influence with spending that benefited the Trump family, such as \$270,000 spent as of early 2017 by a lobbying firm for Saudi Arabia at the Trump hotel in Washington. The *Washington Post* reported that Saudi bookings at Trump Chicago increased 169 percent from the first half of 2016 to the first half of this year, and that the general manager of a Trump hotel in New York told investors that revenues rose partly because of "a last-minute visit to New York by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia."

If Saudi Arabia cannot show that Jamal is safe and sound, NATO countries should jointly expel Saudi ambassadors and suspend weapons sales. The United States should start an investigation under the Magnitsky Act and stand ready to impose sanctions on officials up to M.B.S.

America can also make clear to the Saudi royal family that it should find a new crown prince. A mad prince who murders a journalist, kidnaps a prime minister and starves millions of children should never be celebrated at state dinners, but instead belongs in a prison cell.