

103D CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. J. RES. 295

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States should not establish diplomatic relations with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam until that government abides by internationally accepted standards of religious liberty.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 18, 1993

Mr. GILMAN (for himself, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. ROTH, Mr. PORTER, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, and Mr. LANTOS) introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

JOINT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the United States should not establish diplomatic relations with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam until that government abides by internationally accepted standards of religious liberty.

Whereas approximately 85 percent of the population of Vietnam belongs to the Buddhist faith;

Whereas at least 131 prominent leaders from the Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant faiths are in prison or under house arrest for expressing their beliefs; and members of

other faiths, such as Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, have also suffered persecution;

Whereas more than 500 Buddhists have been arrested protesting religious intolerance and government interference in religious affairs during the current crackdown in Hue and Baria (Vung Tau);

Whereas at least 5 Buddhist have self-immolated themselves since May 1993 to protest the repressive policies of the communist regime;

Whereas the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam was established in 1964 by leaders of the various sects and traditions of Buddhism in South Vietnam, in order to continue and strengthen Buddhism's 2,000 year tradition in the country;

Whereas the Unified Buddhist Church was recognized throughout the world during the Vietnam conflict for its integrity and its commitment to peace and human rights;

Whereas the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam's most prominent monk abroad, Thich Nhat Hanh, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.; and 2 other Unified Buddhist Church monks, Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, were also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 while they were in prison;

Whereas in November 1981, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam sponsored the creation of the Vietnam Buddhist Church, which declared in its founding charter that it was the only legitimate representative of Vietnamese Buddhism within the country and abroad;

Whereas the 2 most prominent leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, Executive Director Thich

Huyan Quang and Secretary General Thich Quang Do, were arrested in February 1982 for protesting the forced incorporation of their church into the state's Vietnam Buddhist Church and have remained under house arrest in subsequent years;

Whereas since April 1992, Venerable Thich Huyan Quang has made several statements publicly challenging the government's repression of Buddhists and asserting the right of the United Buddhist Church to exist and function independently of the government;

Whereas on August 3, 1993, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam responded with an order of its Religious Affairs Commission, ordering Venable Quang to stop all protests and stating that his attempts to revive the Unified Buddhist Church were illegal;

Whereas several other monks were arrested in Vietnam during 1993 for supporting Venable Quang's demands, including Venerable Thich Hai Tang, Venerable Thich Tri Tuu, Venerable Thich Hai Thinh, and Venerable Thich Hanh Duc;

Whereas 18 Catholic clergy and religious workers remain imprisoned or under house arrest solely for activities connected with their religious duties (such as translating and distributing spiritual literature from abroad, writing articles expressing their religious beliefs, and organizing adult religious education classes and other social programs);

Whereas Vietnamese authorities continue to restrict Catholic clergy (for example, by arbitrarily preventing the ordination of more than 20 seminarians on ideological grounds in June 1992, by refusing to allow Ho Chi Minh City

Archbishop Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan permission to return to Vietnam following a visit to the Vatican in 1991, and by refusing to permit clergy who were named to head dioceses by the Vatican to assume their posts);

Whereas Vietnamese authorities continue to persecute and harass Evangelical Protestants who worship in homes to avoid government oversight (for example by currently punishing as many as 35 church leaders with imprisonment, house arrest, or other restrictions, by closing house churches, and by particularly targeting those thought to have ties with or to receive funding from United States churches);

Whereas decree 69 of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, adopted in 1991, strictly controls all religious activity, including worshiping, teaching, training and appointing clergy, publishing, preaching, and evangelizing;

Whereas decree 69 further allows the government to punish any religious activity construed as a threat to the regime;

Whereas the practice of one's religion and the adherence to a religious organization are fundamental rights that must be respected in all societies; and

Whereas it is a violation of these rights for a government to impose its own-established church on all followers of a particular region: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
- 2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
- 3 That it is the sense of the Congress that the United States

1 should not establish diplomatic relations with the Govern-
2 ment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam until—

3 (1) the demands of Venerable Thich Huyen
4 Quang for the right of the Unified Buddhist Church
5 to exist and function in Vietnam are fully met;

6 (2) Venerable Quang and all other monks, as
7 well as clergy of other religions, who have been de-
8 tained for the nonviolent expression of dissent are
9 released;

10 (3) the Government of the Socialist Republic of
11 Vietnam abides by internationally accepted stand-
12 ards of religious liberty as outlined in the United
13 Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All
14 Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based
15 on Religion or Belief, including freedom of con-
16 science and belief and the freedom to worship, to
17 teach religion, to train and appoint clergy, to publish
18 and express religious views, and to meet with coreli-
19 gionists abroad; and

20 (4) other major issues of concern in United
21 States bilateral relations with the Government of
22 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have been fully
23 resolved.

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