

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM'S RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS OF CHAIRMAN GRASSLEY AT HEARING ON VIETNAM PNTR

1. How does the trafficking categorization work?

The U.S. Department of State's Report on Trafficking in Persons released 5 June 2006 placed 26 countries in Tier 1; 79 countries in Tier 2 Non-watch list; 32 countries in Tier 2 Watch list and 12 countries in Tier 3.

Vietnam continues to be listed in Tier 2 Non-watch list, together with 78 others (79 out of 149 countries covered by the report), including such countries as Portugal, Moldova, Thailand, and the Philippines. As compared with other countries in the region, Vietnam is placed higher than Malaysia, India, Taiwan, and China.

2. Why is Vietnam in the Tier 2 Non-watch category?

The major reason is that Vietnam has not made sufficient efforts to combat trafficking, particularly the trafficking of Vietnamese women as brides to destinations in East Asia and the forced labor conditions of many Vietnamese workers sent abroad.

The Vietnamese Government has taken significant steps in this area, including the following:

- increase the level of punishment for trafficking in women;
- pay increased attention to reintegrating victims of trafficking into the community;
- strengthen cooperation with other countries in combating trafficking in women, especially in controlling the Vietnamese border with neighboring countries;
- inspect and regulate services offered by brokers in employment, marriage, child adoption;
- increase activities on poverty reduction and job creation for women; and.
- advocate actively increasing the responsibility of the people in preventing and fighting trafficking in women;

The Government has also been collaborating with concerned countries to fight the crime and to ensure the rights and dignity of Vietnamese nationals who are there through marriages or labor contracts.

With respect to collaboration with the U.S., Vietnamese government agencies have been cooperating with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, providing information and data on this issue at the request of the Embassy.

3. What does the constitution and new religious freedom law say about the right to establish a religion and practice one's faith?

- Citizens have to right to freedom of belief and religion, that is, to follow or not to follow a religion;

- The State guarantees the right to freedom of belief and religion of its citizens.

- The Ordinance on Religion and Belief (passed by the National Assembly on 18 June 2004 and effective on 15 November 2004) has elaborated on provisions in the Constitution and codified the guidelines and policies of the State of Vietnam on religions and beliefs in this new context. This legal document better reflects the aspiration and needs for religious belief and spiritual practices of the people and ensures compliance with international conventions on human rights that Vietnam has signed. Article 38 of the Ordinance eloquently states that "in case of non-compliance with an international convention that Vietnam has signed, the international convention shall prevail."

4. How many religions are recognized by the state, what are they, and what does it mean to not be recognized? Does it mean you cannot hold religious services by law and/or in practice?

On recognized religions: Vietnam is a multi-religious state, with more than 20 million believers, and more than 30,000 places of worship. Buddhism is the largest of the major world religions in Vietnam, with about ten million followers and more than 20,000 pagodas dedicated to Buddha. The second largest is Catholicism, with about six million followers and more than 6,000 churches engaged in religious activities throughout the country. More than 500 churches damaged during the U.S. air war against Vietnam

are being rebuilt. Other recognized religious organizations are Northern Vietnam Evangelical Church and Southern Vietnam Evangelical Church; Caodaism, Hoa hoa and Islam. These 6 major religions consist of thousands of denominations.

Those denominations that have not been registered still can carry out normal religious activities. At the same time, the Government facilitates the process of application for official recognition.

The question of registration is for Protestant denominations only. The process of registration was started a year ago after the Ordinance of Religions and beliefs was promulgated in 1/1/2005. The Prime Minister's ("PM") instruction on Protestant affairs was released at the same time. So far, about 400 house churches and 600 worshiping places in the Central Highlands have been registered. Three denominations (including one of the Baptist Churches) have been recognized. The process of registration for all the remaining denominations has been accelerated according to the Ordinance and PM Instruction.

5. What is the status of Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baptists?

These denominations are in the process of registration. In Vietnam, Baptists have 7 different churches. One of these has been recognized; the remaining is in the process of registration.

6. Of the 2 Cardinals, 1 archbishop and 36 bishops in the Catholic religion, who has been appointed by the Vatican and who by the government of Vietnam? Does the Government appoint cardinals, bishops, and priests etc, or have veto power? When did it last use its veto or disapproval power?

The last time the Government used its veto on a Vatican appointment was in 1998. The current 2 Cardinals, 1 archbishop, and 36 Bishops were all ordained by the Vatican. According to Vietnamese law, the State does not nominate or ordain religious officials or leaders.