

ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỲ PHỔ ĐỘ

Bát Thập Bát Niên
TÒA THÁNH TÂY NINH

(TRANSLATION)

REPORT ON RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES BY THE SACERDOTAL COUNCIL OF THE CAO DAI TAY NINH HOLY SEE, VIET NAM.

(Report submitted to the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights)

Full official name: The Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See, Viet Nam, Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ -The Third Great Universal Religious Amnesty.

Abbreviated name: The Sacerdotal Council of Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See

Website: www.caodai.com.vn (Email : caodai@yahoo.com)

Headquarter location: Cao Dai Holy See, Hoa Thanh District, Tay Ninh Province, Viet Nam.
(the compound of the Holy See total area is 1 square kilometer)

Local temples :

- + 28 Official Representatives of The Sacerdotal Council, out of 39 cities and provinces.
- + 405 local Parish management boards (increase of 38 parishes in comparison with the year 2007).
- + 532 worshipping places (within Viet Nam) including 387 Temples and 145 Holy Mother Temples spreading from mainland to islands ; increase of 39 worshipping places in comparison with the year 2007)
- + 2,000 male and female dignitaries (assigned to work for the religion at the headquarters of the Tay Ninh Holy See and down to the local parishes)
- + 15,000 sub-dignitaries working for the religion in villages, districts, provinces and cities.
- + 3,000,000 Cao Đài followers (within Viet Nam).
- + 14 Sub-dignitaries performing religious duties in the USA have been promoted to the rank of Deacon.

Festival:

There are two yearly traditional grand festivals :

- + Đại Lễ Đức Chi Tôn (translated literally : The Commemoration Ceremony of God, annually held on the 9th day of the first lunar month.
- + Đại Lễ Hoi Yen Dieu Tri Cung (translated literally : The Religious Banquet for the Holy Mother and her Nine Muses, or Commemoration Ceremony for Mother Goddess), annually held on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month.

The Religion's Organizational structure:

In accordance with the Constitution of The Third Great Universal Religious Amnesty, Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See, there are :

- Holy See's Headquarters: The Sacerdotal Council consists of Religious Leaders and 09 Ministries directly under the Council.
- Local Units:
 - + Representative Boards of the Sacerdotal Council in provinces and cities.
 - + Management Boards and Ritual Committees in each parish.

Religious activities :

Dignitaries, sub-dignitaries and followers are subject to the Laws on Religions according to their ranks. Each individual must cultivate his own dignity, integrate into the community and keep upgrading the quality of living standards for his/her own life and for the community where he/she lives in.

Religious Assemblies :

In accordance with the Cao Dai Religion Constitution, there are:

- Monthly meetings: to review religious affairs.
- Periodical General Assembly: Held once every 5 years.
 - + The General Assembly of the Popular Council at the Local Parish's Level. (The aim is to review its religious activities for the past five years, review promotion to a higher rank, receive aspirations of followers and nominate representatives to attend the higher-level General Assembly)
 - + The General Assembly of the Popular Council at the Central Level at the Holy See. (Over 5,000 attendants including Dignitaries, Sub-dignitaries and followers nominated by local Parishes)
 - + The General Assembly of the Sacerdotal Council (held at the Tay Ninh Holy See): To review its religious works of the past five years, review promotion to a higher rank, receive aspirations of followers and make plan for the next five years.

Protection and Promotion of human rights within Cao Dai religion

+ "Implementing the human rights according to international laws".

In the implementation of civil rights, each regime, based on the reality of its people's awareness, has its own ways to protect the people's proper rights within a reasonable framework in order to balance individual benefits and common interests. Therefore, each country's Constitution has its own regulations to protect its people's proper benefits, but each country is different because of the character of its citizens.

In reviewing the 30 articles mentioned in the United Nations Human Rights Announcement, we found that they are quite similar to the Regulations on Civil Rights promulgated in the Constitution of The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. These articles and regulations are suitable to the unique features of Vietnamese's lifestyles in Viet Nam.

As leading dignitaries working for the religion within the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and within the legal framework regulated by laws, we assure that there is no hindrance in our cultivating, proselytizing the religion and building Cao Ðai temples. Up to now, the Sacerdotal Council has established 405 parishes and 532 nice worshipping places scattering from mainland to islands throughout Viet Nam (in comparison with 2007, there is an increase of 38 parishes and 39 worshipping places).

The traditional festivals of Cao Ðai Religion which are annually held at the Tay Ninh Cao Ðai Holy See attract tens of thousands of followers from all over Viet Nam who participate day and night in an orderly manner without any interruption or obstacle. Dignitaries, sub-dignitaries and followers of the Tay Ninh Cao Ðai Holy See from overseas

return home to attend these festivals freely, as well as people from all over the world who also want to participate.

+ “Public awareness of human rights”

Thanks to its stable political status and peaceful country, all Vietnamese people, no matter whatever religions they follow, are provided with favorable conditions to study and pursue their favorite careers in order to develop their family economy. Those people who follow Cao Đai Religion Tay Ninh Holy See have step by step overcome their financial difficulties and increase their income. As a result, their family life has been improved and has been better than it used to be.

However, the awareness of human rights of the public in general and of the Cao Đai followers in particular is rather low. This is because these people are either unintentionally unaware of the situation or deliberately refuse to admit it. People who only care about their own benefits regardless of the common interests were reprimanded according to the laws. However, these people take this opportunity to complain that they lack freedom. Amongst those people, there were few Cao Đai followers who did not abide by the religious laws and interdictions, conspired with outside forces to seek profits, stirred the internal solidarity and derailed the religion’s doctrine and religious laws. All of these wrongdoings defame the religion. As a result, the Sacerdotal Council disapproved their ranks as dignitaries, sub-dignitaries or followers, which then was blamed for “lack of freedom”.

+ “In Cooperation with human rights organizations”

The Sacerdotal Council, Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See, understands thoroughly “the rights to live, enjoy freedom, be equal in front of the laws and be fully protected without any discrimination” because they are the backbone, the fundamental principles of Cao Đai Tay Ninh Holy See.

The utmost philosophy of Cao Đai Religion is “Peace, Democracy and Freedom”. Therefore, the Sacerdotal Council-Tay Ninh Holy See always highly values any cooperation effort for “peace, democracy and freedom.”

Last year 2012, the Sacerdotal Council – Tay Ninh Holy See received the approval from the government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and was provided favorable conditions to host the General Assembly of the Popular Council at local and central levels at Tay Ninh Cao Đai Holy See (All the followers in each parish were allowed to host the General Assembly of the local Popular Council in order to review their religious work of the past five years, respectfully transfer aspirations of local followers to the Sacerdotal Council and make religious plans for the next five years, select those followers who have made good religious achievements to be promoted to higher ranks as regulated and nominate followers who have typically fulfilled their social and religious life as their representatives to attend the General Assembly of the Popular Council at Tay Ninh Cao Đai Holy See which was attended by over 5,000 attendants; These two General Assemblies successfully took place and faced with no difficulties).

In May 2013, His Eminence Cardinal Thuong Tam Thanh, Chairman of the Sacerdotal Council and his 15 delegates who are dignitaries, sub-dignitaries and followers, went abroad to attend the Oomoto Spring Festival in the Holy Land in Ayabe, Japan. In this festival, His

Eminence Cardinal delivered an address and prayed for peace to come to this world. The Vietnamese Government provided every favorable condition for this first overseas missionary of the Cao Ðai delegation. As a result, the trip was such a great success.

+ *Protection of the rights of social groups (Women, children, the elderly, the disabled, the religion followers etc.)*

The followers of Cao Ðai Religion-Tay Ninh Holy See practise monogamy. Both male and female dignitaries and sub-dignitaries have equal rights; children are loved because they are the future of the religion and the country; the elderly persons are looked after, etc. We treat all human beings and living creatures like our brothers/sisters who come from the same origin, have equal relationships and feel obliged to assist each other. Generally speaking, the management of the Cao Ðai Religion – Tay Ninh Holy See is respected and supported by the Vietnamese government.

In terms of social charity work, from 2008 to 2012, the incomplete report of only one fourth of local parishes and the Ministry of Health at Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See shows a total contribution of 70.396.452.224 VNĐ.

We respectfully submit this report to the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights for its review and consideration.

Tay Ninh Holy See, June 12, 2013
THE SACERDOTAL COUNCIL OF TAY NINH HOLY SEE.