

## **VIETNAM’S INTERFAITH CONFEDERATION JOINT STATEMENT**

Media release

1 May 2013

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This year, the Vietnamese government invited the people to submit suggestions for a change in the constitution.

We, the undersigned, are religious leaders of five religions in Vietnam.

We would like to exercise our freedom of expression and put forth our suggestions that Vietnam is in urgent need of a new constitution. This new constitution must:

1. Be a constitutional referendum where the entire population of Vietnam has the right to vote yes or no for a particular proposal that forms part of the constitution, and must be held under international observers monitoring to ensure its legitimacy;
2. Forbid all foreign interference, especially from China, in the running of the state;
3. Allow the people of Vietnam full enjoyment of basic freedoms and human rights pursuant the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
4. Allow a multi-party system where all political parties have the right to operate;
5. All political parties have the right to nominate their representatives for regional and parliamentary positions in a free election based on one-person-one-vote rule;
6. Allow for international observers to monitor government elections to ensure a fair outcome;
7. Be based on the separation of powers doctrine which divides the institutions of government into three branches: legislative, executive and judicial with the aim to establish a fair government.
8. Affirm the government mission to build a Vietnamese nation that is peaceful, non-aligned, free and democratic;
9. Affirm that government must be elected by the people, to serve the people, and to protect the rights of the people.

We are of the view that the existing constitution, under clause 4, gives the Vietnamese Communist Party (‘VCP’) a monopoly on political power. It puts the VCP interests before national interests. The VCP is anti-religion, anti-progress and out of step with history. The communist ideology has destroyed all spiritual, humane and traditional values in Vietnamese society. Under the one-party authoritarian system, the Vietnamese people’s right to basic freedoms, including religious freedom, are not respected.

A new constitution that reflects the will of the people is an important step to return to the people their rightful power and responsibilities, to move the nation towards democracy and progress, and to build a strong and prosperous nation that is capable of preserving national independence and protecting its border.

We call on the United Nations and the international community to support the Vietnamese people in our struggle for human rights, freedom and real democracy.

We are united in our prayers for a peaceful, free and democratic future for our nation.

Vietnam, 1 May 2013

**THE UNDERSIGNED:**

The Most Ven. Thich Khong Tanh (Buddhist Church)

Rev. Dinh Huu Thoai (Catholic Church)

Rev. Le Ngoc Thanh (Catholic Church)

Pastor Nguyen Hoang Hoa (Protestant Church)

Pastor Ho Huu Hoang (Protestant Church)

Ven. Le Quang Liem (Hoa Hao Buddhist Church)

Mr Hua Phi (Cao Dai Church)