



All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation

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The **All India Peace & Solidarity Organization (AIPSO)** is people's forum committed to the causes of peace and international cooperation across the globe. Ever since its emergence in 1951, soon after India's independence, as an integral part of World Peace Council (WPC), AIPSO has been carrying forward the best traditions of the Indian national movement.

Among those who took leading role in formation of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation, are luminaries like Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, veteran Congress leader and freedom fighter, Pandit Sundarlal, disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr M M Atal, leader of the Indian Medical Mission to China, Ajoy Ghosh, freedom fighter and Communist leader, A K Gopalan, freedom fighter and Communist leader, T B Cunha, leader of Goa, Prof. D D Kosambi, as also celebrated film personalities like Prithviraj Kapoor and Balraj Sahni, noted writers Krishan Chander, Rajendra Singh Bedi, renowned poets Vallathol, S Gurbaksh Singh, and many other leading personalities.

The All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO) has been consistently working towards peace, disarmament and global security; for national independence, economic and social justice and development, for protection of the environment, gender equality, secularism, human rights and cultural heritage, solidarity with and support of those peoples and liberation movements fighting for the independence, sovereignty and integrity of their countries, and against imperialism.

“Peace is Everybody's Business”—is our motto, very relevant at a time when the entire world is threatened by growing terrorism, incessant disturbances and unrest across the globe.



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Vietnam's Achievements in Ensuring Human Rights and Freedom to its People: An Appraisal

The All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO) has maintained close relations and exchange with various Vietnamese civil society social and cultural organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations involved in peace and development issues in Vietnam. We have been closely following the recent initiatives taken by Vietnam in the implementation and protection and promotion of human rights, and are in a position to appreciate Vietnam's recent efforts and achievements in improving its citizens' universal rights, specially in the period following the 2nd cycle of the UPR.

1. Vietnam's Achievements in Ensuring Rights and Freedom to its People: A Background

We are convinced that Vietnam is a peace-loving nation and ever since it was triumphant in throwing off the aggression it faced from strong world powers, it has consistently worked towards ensuring the principal rights and freedom of its people. As a result, the UNDP's Human Development Index, which looks into a country's health, education, equality, income, security and environment issues, ranked Vietnam 115th out of 188 countries and territories last year, an achievement that we, who live in South Asia, would certainly want to replicate in our own countries. This has been possible because of the deep commitment of the Vietnamese state to improve people's access to social services, especially vulnerable groups, and make them enjoy their rights to the best possible extent. Vietnam has achieved the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and positively empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. Former UN Secretary-General (2007-2016) Ban Ki-moon said that Vietnam is one of the leading countries of the world in implementing the MDGs.

In as much as the legal framework on human rights is concerned Vietnam has been perfecting it over the years and is a signatory to many international conventions related to human rights and international humanitarian laws. The country has by now joined seven out of nine major international conventions on human rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in 1982), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in 1982), the Convention on the Right of the Child (signed in 1990 and ratified the same year), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (signed in 2007 and ratified in 2015), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (signed in 2013 and ratified in 2015). We believe that as a member of the

abovementioned international conventions on human rights, Vietnam fully exercises all obligations mandated in these conventions, and complies in all seriousness with international commitments on human rights. The fact that UN special rapporteurs have been invited to Vietnam since quite a few years now, shows the openness and cooperation of the country with UN human rights mechanisms.

Keeping this background in mind, the All India Peace and Solidarity Organization, has particularly noted that **after the 2nd cycle of the UPR**, the Vietnamese government has introduced several measures for the improvement and further enhancement of human rights in Vietnam.

2. The 2013 Constitution, Other Judicial Reforms and Their Impact in furthering Human Rights In Vietnam

The National Assembly on 28/11/2013 adopted a Constitution which came into force from 01/01/2014. This Constitution includes several articles which have further expanded the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with international standard of human rights by including specific provisions.

2.1 Freedom of Expression

Article 25 of the 2013 Constitution prescribes that the citizen shall enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, of access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations. The Law of Press was further modified and amended in 2016 in order to further strengthen the freedom of press. Press has become a major instrument in the protection of peoples rights in general, as criticisms from the media and feedback from the people have greatly contributed to the fight against corruption in Vietnam.

As of December 2017, there were 849 news agencies with 1,111 printed newspapers; 196 press offices and e-magazines; 67 radio and television stations with 182 channels; access to 75 international television channels, including such big names as CNN, BBC, Bloomberg, Australia Network and those from France, Germany, Italia, Korea and China. There is one major national news agency, 196 e-newspapers and thousands of e-portals on the internet. Vietnam has 18,000 registered journalists. All the big news agencies and renowned newspapers are accessible to Vietnamese readers via the internet, including Reuters, BBC, VoA, AP, AFP, CNN, Kyodo, Economist and Financial Times... Newspapers have become a forum for many social organizations and people and an important instrument to protect the rights of people and freedoms of citizens, given their role in contributing to and monitoring the implementation of State laws and policies, especially those related to human rights.

All this has contributed to a culture of free discussion and debate.

2.2 Socio-economic Equality

The 2013 Constitution, through its Article 16 ensures the right to equality, and no discrimination before the Laws, while the Article 26 is specifically for ensuring right on gender equality. Women play more and more important roles in the political system, economy, culture and society in Vietnam. In the National Assembly of the 2016-2021 period, the participation of women stands at 26.72 percent, up 2.62 percent compared to the last tenure. At the provincial level, the percentage of women participation in People's Council stands at 26.54 percent (an increase of 1.37 percent); and at district level it stands at 27.85 percent (increased 4.88 percent); at ward level, it is 26.59 percent (up 4.88 percent). Besides, there are other policies that have been adopted regarding rights for vulnerable groups, gender equality, rights for women, rights for people with disabilities, rights for elderly people, rights for working people. These policies are implemented through many of national programs and campaigns from the grassroots level to governmental level.

The Articles 14 and 15 bind the State to respect, protect and guarantee human rights in political, civil, economic, cultural and social fields. Vietnam's economic growth rate is of 6.81% of GDP as of 2017. Poverty was reduced from 7 percent in 2015 to an estimated rate of 5.2 percent in 2016. Vietnam has announced the National Action Plan with 17 Vietnamese Sustainable Development Goals (VSDGs) and 115 specific goals in accordance with the national conditions and priorities. The Vietnamese Government has initiated many other programs regarding poverty reduction, food security, sustainable agricultural promotion, public health (National Goal on new rural development, National Goal on sustainable poverty reduction; adoption for Housing Law 2014; National Strategy for the Protection, Care and Promotion of the People's Health 2011-2020, vision to 2030 (2013), etc.). A whopping 20% of total public expenditure is earmarked for education, resulting in near 100% literacy and a strong system of higher education with 235 universities, and several hundreds of colleges and vocational institutions.

The implementation of such policies has improved the quality of life of average Vietnamese people, and ensured that social justice, including gender justice, is a right and not a privilege.

2.3 Religious Equality

In India, we value our rich diversity of faiths. Like India, Vietnam is a country with diverse religions of the world including Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam and other religions of local origins, all enjoying a legal status. Since the last UPR, and thanks to the 2013 Constitution, the Vietnamese State enacted a Law of Beliefs and Religions which came into force from January 1, 2018, as well as 2 new decrees, clearly establishing the right to freedom of religions and belief.

Vietnam has 41 religious organizations, and thousands of religious groups that conduct their activities in private and public spaces. In addition, there are more than 50 dedicated institutions for the study of various religions. This allows for several religious publications as well as events to conduct religious activities in legal framework.

Respect for all religions is a must for promotion of human rights. Vietnamese government has made specific efforts in this direction.

3. Conclusion

Since the last cycle of UPR, we note that the Vietnamese government has been a party to several international conventions on human rights. These include the ILO conventions, of which Vietnam is a member since 1992. At regional level, Vietnam joined the process of building the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, while contributing to ASEAN Commissions for women and children and migrant workers. Bilaterally, Vietnam has set up official human right dialogues with the US, Switzerland, Norway, Australia and the European Union.

It is clear from the above that Vietnam attaches special importance to participating in international consensus on human rights and at a domestic level, it is focussed on specific areas to improve its realization of full human rights to its citizens.

As an organization with a long history of working for peace, economic and social justice and development, gender equality, secularism, and human rights, we see Vietnam as a country which has made considerable investment in promoting and strengthening human rights, referring specially to the period following the 2nd cycle of the UPR.