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# **Press Release**

## **Re: Current state of the nation and the Internet Security Act together with the Draft Laws on the Special Economic Administrative Zones (AKA Bill on Special Economic Zones)**

Rank and file members of the Honourable Buddhist Sangha and Vietnamese Buddhist followers in Australia and New Zealand are always devoted to their fatherland Vietnam and take part with the Vietnamese people in their struggle for democracy, human rights and territorial integrity.

The duty of Buddhist followers consists of following the Buddha's teachings in expressing our gratitude for the 4 cardinal bounties bestowed upon us by our Ancestors, the Triple Gem, Fellow sentient beings, and especially our Fatherland, at this important juncture of history.

When the fate of our nation is at stake, our Congregation affirms the following:

### **I. Turmoil in Vietnam in the last few weeks:**

Recently, the political situation in Vietnam reached boiling points, leading to political instability because of 2 important events.

First, on 12 June 2018, under instructions from the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), the National Assembly has passed the Internet Security Act.

Second, the fact that in the aftermath of huge demonstrations all over Vietnam, especially in Saigon, Hanoi and Binh Thuan, with hundreds of thousands of people taking part, the Politburo was terrified and instructed the National Assembly to postpone the draft bill on Special Economic Zones to reconsider later in October.

In short, the Internet Security Act aims at achieving the following main objectives:

a. Tightening control on all criticisms of failures and misdeeds by government officials

b. Mandating internet companies such as Google and Facebook to install their regional head offices in Vietnam in order to access direct information on all individual citizens without the need to seek court orders in democratic countries.

c. To render it so difficult that American internet companies such as Google and Facebook would quit cyberspace in Vietnam and be replaced by Chinese companies such as Baidu and Weibo or similar Chinese entities.

Contemporaneously with the Internet Security Act, the CPV has also drafted a bill on Special Economic Zones aiming at the following objectives:

a. To award to China, through land leases of up to 99 years three strategic Vietnamese islands in 3 regions of Vietnam:

- In the north is Van Don island, in the province of Quang Ninh, area 551Km<sup>2</sup>
- In central Vietnam is Bac Van Phong island of Van Ninh District, Khanh Hoa province, area 550Km<sup>2</sup>
- In the south is Phu Quoc island, Kien Giang province, area 589 Km<sup>2</sup>

b. To sell to China our national sovereignty through the following provisions of the bill on Special Economic Zones:

- i. Chinese nationals can immigrate without limitations (sub- section 4 of section 46)
- ii. Application of foreign laws or traditions in contracts (sub-section 1 of section 6)
- iii. Disputes can be adjudicated by foreign courts (sub-section 3 of section 7)
- iv. Contracts can be based on foreign currencies (sub-section 1d of section 29)

## **II. Causes of these instabilities:**

Causes are complex but the main ones are:

1. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has infiltrated its personnel to the highest echelons of the CPV, not only in each administrative unit at provincial level, but right at the level of the Central Committee and Politburo. Today, the CPV is identical to a branch of the CCP but in name

2. The CCP has utilized cash, under the guise of bribery, bullied and bought the majority of high ranking members of the CPV, from lower echelons to the Central Committee and the Politburo.

3. The CCP has promised to intervene into Vietnamese politics, by force if necessary, in order to protect the CPV in its leadership position and Vietnamese communist leaders believe in these promises.

## **III. Consequences of these 2 pieces of legislations:**

The consequences of these 2 complementary laws by the CPV are extremely damaging to our nation.

1. Facing vehement oppositions from the entire nation, the Politburo of the CPV, while temporarily delaying the passing of the bill on Special Economic Zones, still instructed the National Assembly to pass the Internet Security Act for tactical reasons. They want to utilize this law as a shield, protecting them from opposition by the people, gagging the people and hiding all violations of our sovereignty by the Chinese on special economic zones in the future.

2. If Google or Facebook agree to locate their regional head offices in Vietnam, then the CPV can simply instruct them to provide all individual information on each citizen. Meanwhile, if these head offices are located in democratic countries with separation of powers, the police must apply for orders from the courts who are independent from the executive. This would be extremely difficult for them.

3. If Google and Facebook withdraw from Vietnam, then the CPV will invite in Chinese internet companies such as Baidu or Weibo. Thus, Vietnamese communist police as well as the CCP can access the private information of each Vietnamese citizen and the whole people will be dead meat for them.

4. One of the most convincing excuses for a powerful nation to take over land belonging to a weaker nation is to protect its nationals and legitimate economic interests. Once these islands have received billions of US dollars in investment and once the Chinese resident population has reached hundreds of thousands or millions, we can be assured that China will intervene militarily and occupy these islands as Russia has invaded and taken Crimea from Ukraine.

5. China has blatantly wrested the Paracels from the Republic of Vietnam and part of the Spratleys because Communist Vietnam was unable to defend it. Recently China has installed missile launchers threatening continental Vietnam. They have conducted live battle group exercises threatening our sovereignty, controlled 90% of the South China Sea as well as the greater part of Ban Gioc fall, Nam Quan Pass... These are clear evidence of their imperialism and expansionist policies.

#### **IV. Appeal by the Unified Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia- New Zealand:**

Our Congregation earnestly appeals:

1. On the government of The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and CPV to awaken to the impending peril facing our nation, respect the people's demand for democracy and justice, abandon dictatorship which constitutes the cause of social injustice, moral decadence and "the national evil of corruption"; speedily build democracy on the bases of constitutionalism, the rule of law and pluralism, so that our Vietnamese people could escape Chinese imperialism and join the family of civilized nations, democracy and human rights.

The Congregation also appeals to the armed forces of Vietnam today to honour only their duty to protect our fatherland and the people, not to protect any political party in particular. Thus they cannot follow orders from the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) who harbours malevolent intentions to sell out our territorial and economic sovereignty.

2. On the Australian government to pull on their diplomatic, commercial and economic levers and apply pressure on the government of the CPV to release unconditionally all political, religious prisoners and prisoners of conscience as well as cease all measures to oppress people participating in demonstrations, peacefully exercising their freedom of expression in all of Vietnam. Australian aids to Vietnam should be made conditional upon tangible step by step progress in the implementation of human rights, civil rights and rights of political, cultural and social benefit natures... that Vietnam has solemnly pledged before the international community.

3. On the Free Vietnamese Communities in Australia and the whole world, including inside Vietnam, especially Buddhist followers, to courageously rise, for our faith and our country, express our patriotism through various ways such as mass demonstration, civil disobedience, in order to pressure the CPV to repeal the Internet Security Act and relegate forever to the dustbin of history the bill on Special Economic Zones.

*Sydney, Australia on 30 June, 2018*

**Permanent Council of the Congregation**