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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure

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on behalf of the EPP-ED Group

on Vietnam: freedom of religion

PE 338.627

B5-0502/2003

European parliament resolution on Vietnam: freedom of religion

The European parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Vietnam, in particular those of 16 November 2000, 5 July 2001 and 15 May 2003,

- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam of July 1995, Article 1 of which lays down respect for human rights and democratic principles as the basis for such cooperation,

- having regard to the EC-Vietnam Strategy Paper 2002-2006,

A. considering that the freedom of religion is one of the fundamental freedoms defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed by various international conventions to which Vietnam is party,

B. underlining the fact that the EU-Vietnam Cooperation Agreement is explicitly founded on the respect of the fundamental rights as defined in the above-mentioned conventions,

C. considering also that despite the repeated declarations of the Vietnamese authorities, the situation of the fundamental freedoms in Vietnam, especially of the freedom of religion, remains extremely worrying,

D. regretting deeply that the unexpected and widely publicised meeting on 2 April of this year between the Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Patriarch of the (outlawed) Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, has not been followed by a radical change in the policy and behaviour of the Vietnamese authorities, but by the resumption and intensification of the repression of the UBCV, as well as by the continuing persecution of other non-recognised confessions such as the Protestant Churches of the Montagnards or the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church,

E. recalling that the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, has for the last twenty years been detained in internal exile without trial, while during the same period the Venerable Thich Quang Do has been detained either in prisons or re-education camps or kept under house arrest,

F. recalling that in October of this year, in the Nguyen Thieu Monastery (province of Binh Dinh), the UBCV held its first assembly since it was banned in 1982, discussing important religious questions and electing new leaders,

G. noting that the Vietnamese authorities at first tried to prevent the assembly from being held through the use of force, then mounted an operation of intimidation lasting ten hours against the leaders of the UBCV, and finally arrested the leaders, harassed the faithful, and isolated the pagodas,

H. deploring the decision to place the Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and the Venerable Thich Quang Do under house arrest, and the immediate condemnation of the Venerables Thich Tue Sy, Thich Thanh Huyen, and Thich Nguyen Ly, as well as the personal assistant of the Patriarch, the Venerable Thich Dong Tho, to two years' administrative detention by written order of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, and the condemnation of four other monks, Thich Thien Hanh, Thich Vien Dinh, Thich Thai Hoa and Thich Nguyen Vuong, to two years' administrative detention by "verbal" order of the authorities of Hue and of Ho Chi Minh City,

I. noting with concern that on this occasion Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do were accused arbitrarily of being in possession of "state secrets", an offence which is punishable by the death penalty,

J. recalling the condemnation of Father Nguyen Van Ly and three of his relatives as well as the continual repression suffered by the Christian Montagnards and the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church,

K. noting that other religious groups are under government surveillance as well despite Vietnam's constitutional guarantee of the freedom of religion and belief for its citizens,

1. strongly condemns the new and more serious wave of repression of the religious freedom of the UBCV and of the Christian Montagnards in Vietnam and the deliberate and carefully planned policy of the Vietnamese regime for the elimination of non-recognised Churches, especially of the UBCV;

2. calls on the Vietnamese authorities to put an immediate end to the policy of repression of the UBCV, the Christian Montagnards and other religious groups and to guarantee all these Churches a legal status and full religious freedom, beginning by re-establishing the right to existence of the UBCV;

3. calls on the Vietnamese government to release immediately all Vietnamese citizens detained as a result of their faith, their religious practices or simply their attachment to the freedom of religion, beginning with the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Patriarch of the UBCV, and the Venerable Thich Quang Do, his number two;

4. invites the Commission to place the question of the freedom of religion in Vietnam at the top of the agenda for the meeting of the mixed EU-Vietnam Committee, which will take place in Brussels on 21 November;

5. calls on the Council and the Commission to use all political and diplomatic means to ensure that the freedom of religion finally becomes a reality in Vietnam;

6. calls on the diplomatic representations of the European Union and of its Member States in Vietnam to follow the case of the dignitaries of the UBCV imprisoned or kept under house arrest, to pay particular attention to the situation of religious freedom in the country, and to co-ordinate their efforts to promote this freedom in a concrete manner;

7. recommends the appointment of a delegation of the European Parliament to visit Vietnam, to appraise the religious situation, especially that of the UBCV, and to meet its leaders, first and foremost the Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and the Venerable Thich Quang Do;

8. warmly congratulates the heads of the UBCV for the high moral qualities, the determination and the constancy which they have shown in their long non-violent struggle for the affirmation of the freedom of religion, human rights and democracy in Vietnam;

9. instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the President, the Prime Minister, and the President of the People's Assembly of Vietnam, the Patriarch and the number two of the UBCV, the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the freedom of religion.