



Vietnam

Suppression of religious freedom among ethnic minorities

# The 25-year persecution of the Hmong's Duong Van Minh Religion



## **Vietnam**

Suppression of religious freedom among ethnic minorities

### **The 25-year persecution of the Hmong's Duong Van Minh Religion**

**Copyright © August 2014, VETO! Human Rights Defenders' Network**

**All rights reserved**

#### Cover photos:

Screenshots from a video clip on the government's assault and destruction of a shed for storing funeral objects of the Duong Van Minh religion in Lè Hamlet, Hùng Lợi Village, Yên Sơn District, Tuyên Quang Province, S.R. Vietnam, on Oct 15, 2013,

available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Fy3gR4OSGM>



**VETO! HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' NETWORK**

**- DEUTSCHE SEKTION e.V.**

**als gemeinnützig anerkannt**

**P.O. Box 1506**

**61215 Bad Nauheim**

**Germany**

**Tel: +49 (0)176 495 23110**

**Email: VETO.germany@gmail.com**

#### **DONATION**

**Sparkasse Oberhessen**

**IBAN: DE18 5185 0079 0027 119298**

**BIC: HELADEF1FRI**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Summary and Recommendations .....	6
2.	Methodology of gathering information for this report.....	8
3.	International standards on the right to freedom of religion or belief.....	8
3.1.	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	8
3.2.	General Comments CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 (1-5)	8
3.3.	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	9
3.4.	Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief	10
4.	The Duong Van Minh religion (“đạo Dương Văn Minh”).....	10
4.1.	The Hmong's geographic and cultural areas	12
4.2.	Religious issues of Hmong people since the late 1980s	13
4.3.	Impact of the Duong Van Minh religion	15
4.4.	About Mr. Duong Van Minh	16
4.4.1	Belief .....	16
4.4.2.	Arbitrary imprisonment for the first time .....	17
4.4.3.	Arbitrary imprisonment for the second time.....	18
4.4.4.	Preventing from accessing medical treatment .....	19
4.4.5.	Meetings with the US and EU diplomats .....	19
4.5.	“The new way of life”	20
5.	Viewpoints of the Communist Party and Government in Vietnam .....	20
5.1.	Conference of the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region	21
5.2.	Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions, and Decree No. 92/2012/NĐ-CP	23
5.3.	Documents of the Communist Party in Provinces Tuyen Quang and Cao Bang	24
5.3.1.	Document of the Communist Party in Province Tuyen Quang.....	24
5.3.2.	Document of the Communist Party in Province Cao Bang.....	25
5.4.	Directives of the Government	26
5.4.1.	Controversial dispatch of .....	26
5.4.2.	Directives at local level.....	29
5.5.	Two propaganda documents	30
5.5.1.	Propaganda booklet in three languages .....	30
5.5.2.	Propaganda booklet in Vietnamese .....	31
6.	Destroying 24 SSFO in four provinces .....	33

6.1.	Funeral rituals of the Duong Van Minh religion	33
6.2.	Construction wave of SSFO in three Northern Provinces in 2007	34
6.3.	Construction wave of SSFO in four Northern Provinces in 2013	34
6.4.	The destruction of SSFO in Province Tuyen Quang	35
6.4.1.	Overview of the destruction of four SSFO in Province Tuyen Quang .....	35
6.4.2.	CASE STUDY 1:.....	36
6.4.3.	Video clips on destruction of SSFO in Province Tuyen Quang.....	38
6.5.	The destruction of SSFO in Province Cao Bang	38
6.5.1.	Overview of the destruction of 10 SSFO in Cao Bang .....	38
6.5.2.	CASE STUDY 2:.....	40
6.5.3.	Video clips on destruction of SSFO in Province Cao Bang.....	46
6.6.	The destruction of SSFO in Province Bac Kan	47
6.6.1.	Overview of the destruction of 11 SSFO in Bac Kan .....	47
6.6.2.	Video clip on destruction of SSFO in Bac Kan .....	47
6.7.	The destruction of SSFO in Province Thai Nguyen	47
7.	Imprisoned Duong Van Minh believers.....	48
7.1.	Duong Van Tu and Ly van Dinh	48
7.2.	Thao Quan Mua	51
7.3.	Hoang Van Sang	53
7.4.	Ly Van Hau and Hoang Van Pao	55
7.5.	Duong Van Thanh, Hoang Van Su and Hoang Van Sinh	55
7.6.	Vu A Su	56
8.	Other suppressive and discriminating measures.....	56
8.1.	Hostile propaganda	56
8.2.	Forcing to sign renouncement declarations	57
8.3.	Expelling from the Communist Party, state agencies and state-sanctioned organizations	57
8.4.	Harassments	59
8.4.1.	Summons .....	59
8.4.2.	Illegal house searches.....	59
8.4.3.	Control of identity card and driver license .....	60
8.4.4.	Confiscation .....	60
9.	Demonstrations for religious freedom.....	60
10.	Acknowledgments.....	64

APPENDIX I .....65

List of 24 funeral storage sheds of Duong Van Minh religion .....65

**APPENDIX 2**.....68

**List of 10 imprisoned Hmong believers of Duong Van Minh Religion**.....68

DOCUMENTS:.....69

**DOCUMENT 1: 120425 Communiqué of Steering Committee North West Region.pdf** 69

**DOCUMENT 2: 120531 Order of Communist Party in Cao Bang Province.pdf** 69

**DOCUMENT 3: 130504 Launching a Concerted Campaign in Van Thu Hamlet.pdf**69

**DOCUMENT 4: 131008 Urgent Denounce of Hmong-Duong Van Minh.pdf** 69



## 1. Summary and Recommendations

In October 2013 about 100 Hmong from Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen went to Hanoi twice to demand the freedom to practice their Duong Van Minh religion.<sup>1</sup> They stayed in public parks and went daily to government offices to request that the central government stop the local government officials from harassing and arresting Duong Van Minh believers, and destroying the believers' outbuildings used to store funeral items. They also requested the government to publicly renounce its official slandering of Mr. Duong Van Minh, the person who started showing the Hmong the "new path" in 1989, including a reformed approach to funerals that involve the construction and use of sheds for storing funeral objects (SSFO).

The various government offices kept passing the buck to one another, without anyone giving a reply to the requests. Worse, public security officers assaulted the petitioners through raids conducted during the day and at night to force them to return to their homes, causing serious injuries to several petitioners.

In the meantime the Vietnamese government arrested at least 10 Duong Van Minh believers and charged most of them with "abusing the democratic freedoms" under Article 258 of Vietnam's Criminal Code. Courts gave out prison sentences to a number of victims, particularly those who are fluent in Vietnamese and represented the other believers when they went into government offices. Among the larger group who returned to their homes, about ten took refuge in the forests and hills after the local public security units subjected them to repeated interrogations.

Until end of December 2013, the government had destroyed all 24 SSFO of Duong Van Minh believers in four provinces, Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen. Government security forces used truncheons and electric batons during their raids on the outbuildings, seriously injuring many victims, primarily women and children. In their attack on the outbuilding in Khuoi Vin Hamlet, Cao Bang, public security officers seriously injured several victims through their use of chemical weapons.

As a member of the United Nations' Human Rights Council beginning in January 2014, Vietnam should abide by the council's pledge to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>2</sup> As a signatory (in 1982) to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Vietnam should respect and fully enable the human rights mentioned in those documents. In suppressing the Duong Van Minh religion, Vietnam has violated ICCPR's Article 18 on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and ICERD's Article 5 on civil rights.

Vietnam's systematic and intensive suppression of the Duong Van Minh religion began in 1989 and has gone on for 25 years, originating from the Communist Party's narrow and indefensible

---

<sup>1</sup> The Duong Van Minh religion is a variant of Christian religion for Hmong ethnics. The Duong Van Minh has up to 10.000 believers living in the four Northeastern provinces of Vietnam. It is not recognized by the Vietnamese government although it has sought for a permit during the last 25 years.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution on Human Rights Council, A/RES/60/251, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 15 March 2006

definition of religion and beliefs. This definition is contrary to ICCPR Article 18 and the UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 22 (on Article 18). This definition should not be the basis for deciding which religious organizations may operate in Vietnam. The government's pressuring believers to give up their religion or any other suppressive acts aiming to a renouncement of faith constitute a violation of an inalienable human right, the right to have or adopt one's religious belief as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of ICCPR Article 18.

Furthermore, the suppression of the Duong Van Minh faith is contrary to ICERD Article 5, and Articles 2 and 6 of the UN's Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The government has declared that some religions are evil even though those are similar in doctrine and rites to other religions. Vietnam has been gradually accepting an increasing number of different Protestant denominations among the "Kinh", the dominant ethnic group in Vietnam, but continues to be suspicious of the variants of Christianity among ethnic minorities (e.g. the Duong Van Minh faith). This amounts to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. The government has been benefiting from the Hmong's lack of proficiency in Vietnamese and lack of knowledge about the law in suppressing the Duong Van Minh faith through intimidation and violence.

Duong Van Minh believers have been resorting to non-violent means in defending their right to religious freedom over the past 25 years. They wish to obtain the government's authorization to practice their religion openly.

### **Recommendations to the Vietnamese Government:**

- Withdraw all directives concerning the suppression of the Duong Van Minh religion and authorize this religious organization to operate freely;
- Respect the right to have and adopt religious belief as an inalienable, internationally recognized human right; forbid all measures used to force believers to renounce the Duong Van Minh religion;
- Cancel all harassment measures against Mr. Duong Van Minh and stop blocking him from receiving medical treatment;
- Release all those detained or imprisoned for being a Duong Van Minh follower;
- Forbid the destruction of the sheds for storing funeral objects of Hmong people;
- Investigate past attacks against Duong Van Minh believers, including all instances of property confiscation or destruction, of physical harm and injuries, and of discrimination; compensate the victims;
- Amend the definition of belief and religion in the 2004 Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions to interpret in broader way the right to religious freedom and issue the Law on Beliefs and Religions in compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

## 2. Methodology of gathering information for this report

The following sources were used for this report:

- Interviews with Mr. Duong Van Minh in January and February 2014;
- Interviews with several Duong Van Minh believers in the four Northeastern provinces;
- Documents supplied by Duong Van Minh believers;
- Vietnamese government's documents and web postings;
- Video clips showing the destruction of SSFO in different locations

All individuals interviewed provided informed consent to participate. Several in-depth and confidential dialogs were conducted from October 2013 through March 2014.

This report made use of only documents in Vietnamese, the official language of Vietnam. Interpreters were used in interviews because many Hmong people do not speak Vietnamese.

We will preserve the confidentiality of a number of sources for their safety's sake. VETO! maintains the original sources and can show them as needed. All photos and video clips are attributed to sources if they are other than those maintained at VETO! Office.

**Abbreviation: SSFO** [shed(s) for storing funeral objects]

## 3. International standards on the right to freedom of religion or belief

### 3.1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

#### Article 18:

1. *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.*
2. *No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.*
3. *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.*
4. *The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.*

### 3.2. General Comments CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 (1-5)

General Comment No. 22 on the Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience or Religion, adopted by the Human Rights Committee under Article 40, Paragraph 4, of the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):<sup>3</sup>

1. *The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (which includes the freedom to hold beliefs) in article 18 (1) is far-reaching and profound; it encompasses freedom of thoughts on all matters, personal conviction and the commitment to religion or belief, whether manifested individually or in community with others. The Committee draws the attention of States parties to the fact that the freedom of thought and the freedom of conscience are protected equally with the freedom of religion and belief. The fundamental character of these freedoms is also reflected in the*

---

<sup>3</sup> General Comment No. 22 of the Human Rights Committee on the Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience or Religion [http://ccprcentre.org/doc/ICCPR/General%20Comments/CCPR.C.21.Rev1.Add4\\_%28GC22%29\\_En.pdf](http://ccprcentre.org/doc/ICCPR/General%20Comments/CCPR.C.21.Rev1.Add4_%28GC22%29_En.pdf)



*fact that this provision cannot be derogated from, even in time of public emergency, as stated in article 4 (2) of the Covenant.*

2. *Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms belief and religion are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reasons, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility by a predominant religious community.*
3. *Article 18 distinguishes the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief from the freedom to manifest religion or belief. It does not permit any limitations whatsoever on the freedom of thought and conscience or on the freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of one's choice. These freedoms are protected unconditionally, as is the right of everyone to hold opinions without interference in article 19 (1). In accordance with articles 18 (2) and 17, no one can be compelled to reveal his thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief.*
4. *The freedom to manifest religion or belief may be exercised "either individually or in community with others and in public or private". The freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts. The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, as well as various practices integral to such acts, including the building of places of worship, the use of ritual formulae and objects, the display of symbols, and the observance of holidays and days of rest. The observance and practice of religion or belief may include not only ceremonial acts but also such customs as the observance of dietary regulations, the wearing of distinctive clothing or headcoverings, participation in rituals associated with certain stages of life, and the use of a particular language customarily spoken by a group. In addition, the practice and teaching of religion or belief includes acts integral to the conduct by religious groups of their basic affairs, such as, inter alia, the freedom to choose their religious leaders, priests and teachers, the freedom to establish seminaries or religious schools and the freedom to prepare and distribute religious texts or publications.*
5. *The Committee observes that the freedom to "have or to adopt" a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including, inter alia, the right to replace one's current religion or belief with another or to adopt atheistic views, as well as the right to retain one's religion or belief. Article 18 (2) bars coercions that would impair the right to have or adopt a religion or belief, including the use of threat of physical force or penal sanctions to compel believers or non-believers to adhere to their religious beliefs and congregations, to recant their religion or belief or to convert. Policies or practices having the same intention or effect, such as for example those restricting access to education, medical care, employment or the rights guaranteed by article 25 and other provisions of the Covenant are similarly inconsistent with article 18 (2). The same protection is enjoyed by holders of all beliefs of a non-religious nature.*

### **3.3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)**

#### **Article 5**

*In compliance with the fundamental obligations laid down in article 2 of this Convention, States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights:*

- a) *The right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice;*
- b) *The right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm, whether inflicted by government officials or by any individual group or institution;*
- c) *Political rights, in particular the right to participate in elections-to vote and to stand for election-on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, to take part in the Government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service;*
- d) *Other civil rights, in particular:*
  - i. *The right to freedom of movement and residence within the border of the State;*

- ii. *The right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's country;*
- iii. *The right to nationality;*
- iv. *The right to marriage and choice of spouse;*
- v. *The right to own property alone as well as in association with others;*
- vi. *The right to inherit;*
- vii. *The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;*
- viii. *The right to freedom of opinion and expression;*
- ix. *The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;*
- e) *Economic, social and cultural rights, in particular:*
  - i. *The rights to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to equal pay for equal work, to just and favourable remuneration;*
  - ii. *The right to form and join trade unions;*
  - iii. *The right to housing;*
  - iv. *The right to public health, medical care, social security and social services;*
  - v. *The right to education and training;*
  - vi. *The right to equal participation in cultural activities;*
- f) *The right of access to any place or service intended for use by the general public, such as transport hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres and parks.*

### **3.4. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief**

#### **Article 2:**

1. *No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or other belief.*
2. *For the purposes of the present Declaration, the expression "intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief" means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.*

#### **Article 6 (a):**

*In accordance with article 1 of the present Declaration, and subject to the provisions of article 1, paragraph 3, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, the following freedoms:*

*(a) To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;*

### **4. The Duong Van Minh religion ("đạo Dương Văn Minh")**

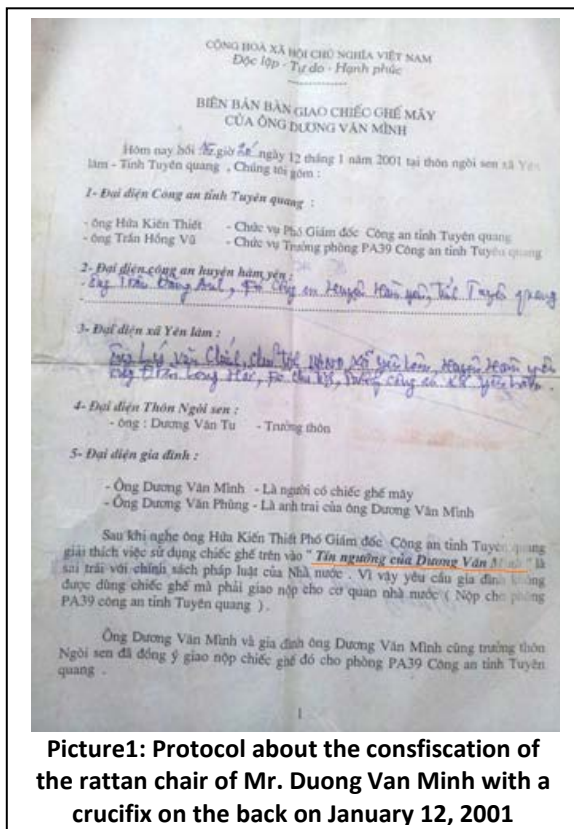
Many Hmongs who advocate for the Duong Van Minh faith in Cao Bang, Bac Kan and Tuyen Quang said that they do not know if the Duong Van Minh faith is a religion or not according to the Kinh's definition.<sup>4</sup> All they want is to be allowed to believe in and follow Mr. Duong Van Minh's "new way" teachings because these have enabled them to adapt to modern life.<sup>5</sup> They do not understand why the government forbids them from following those teachings. Mr. Duong Van Minh taught them to give up the cult of spirits, yet the government accused this faith of superstition. Mr. Duong Van Minh taught them to put a deceased person in a coffin and leave it in their house for no more than a day before burying the body. Yet the government forces them to resurrect the Hmong "tradition" of suspending the bodies of dead people for 7 days and 7 nights. They believe that the government errs when it imprisons Duong Van Minh

<sup>4</sup> "Kinh" is the majority ethnic group in Vietnam whose native tongue is Vietnamese.

<sup>5</sup> Several interviews involving Hmong men between October 2013 and March 2014 .

believers and destroys the SSFO (these are for storing certain ceremonial items made from wood that the Duong Van Minh believers use at funerals).

In the Vietnamese language, “đạo Duong Văn Minh” (Duong Van Minh religion) has the same meaning as “tôn giáo Duong Văn Minh”. Here “đạo” is a synonym of “tôn giáo” and both mean faith or religion.<sup>6</sup> But “đạo” also means the path, the way that the faithful must follow to fulfill their religion's teachings. “đạo” has an even broader meaning outside of religion, i.e., behavior or righteous life, as in “đạo làm người” which means “correct behavior for human beings”, or “sống phải đạo” which means “leading a righteous life”. Therefore following Mr. Duong Van Minh's teachings can also mean “living the Duong Van Minh way”, a less religious interpretation.



**Picture1: Protocol about the confiscation of the rattan chair of Mr. Duong Van Minh with a crucifix on the back on January 12, 2001**

Following police forces' assault on Oct. 15, 2013 on Hmong demonstrators in Hanoi, 35 Hmong representatives wrote in a letter of grievance addressed to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in which they stated: “We are Hmong people who do not advocate for any particular religion, who follow the government's call for citizens to modernize in all aspects”.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the Hmong whom VETO! has interviewed perceived Mr. Duong Van Minh's teachings as the “New Way”. They believe that they behave consistently with the Communist Party's and the government's call to modernization. The only difference in their case is that they acknowledge the person who advocates for modernization, Mr. Duong Van Minh.

The government suppresses the Duong Van Minh faith because it doesn't consider “the Duong Van Minh organization” as a religious organization which conducts “activities which arise from religious beliefs” in compliance with Vietnamese law. The government views the

organization as “illegal” because it lacks official permission. The Communist Party and government have frequently brought up this perspective in recent years. However, until at least 2001, the provincial government in Tuyen Quang still viewed the Duong Van Minh organization as a religious belief. The public security protocol issued when they confiscated Mr. Duong Van Minh's rattan chair on January 12, 2001 contains the following material:<sup>8</sup>

*“Based on explanations advanced by Mr. Hua Kien Thiet, Deputy Director of Public Security for Tuyen Quang Province, the use of the chair for the purpose of Duong Van Minh religious belief is contrary to official legal policy. We request that the family stops using*

<sup>6</sup> So Buddhism is called “đạo Phật” or “Phật giáo”, Catholicism “đạo Thiên Chúa” or “Thiên Chúa giáo”, Islam “đạo Hồi” or “Hồi giáo”, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Handwritten “Letter of Grievance” submitted to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on Oct. 16, 2013 (copy available at VETO!)

<sup>8</sup> “Protocol about the confiscation of Mr. Duong Van Minh's rattan chair”, issued on January 12, 2001 (copy available at VETO!)

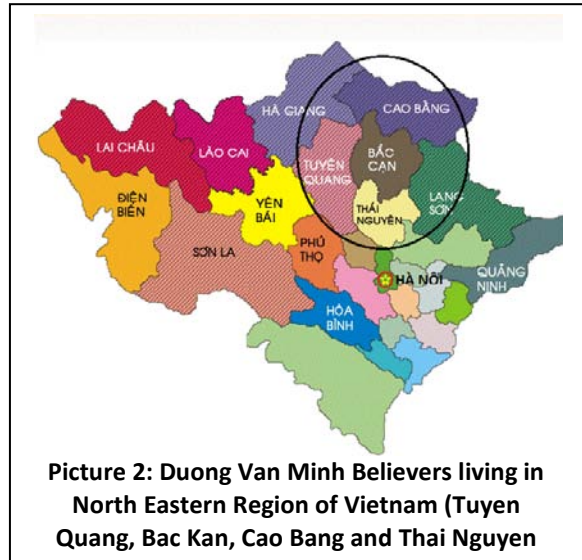
*this rattan chair by submitting it to the custody of the government (PA39 Office, Tuyen Quang Public Security." (Picture 1)*

Mr. Hua Kien Thiet is currently the director of Public Security for Tuyen Quang, Mr. Duong Van Minh's home province.

#### 4.1. The Hmong's geographic and cultural areas

As one of the 54 ethnic groups making up the Vietnamese population, the Hmongs live primarily in mountainous areas in Northern Vietnam. Outside of Vietnam, the H'mongs live in Southern China, Northern Laos and Thailand. Based on Vietnam's statistics, the 2009 Hmong population in Vietnam was 1 million,<sup>9</sup> 1.25% of the total population (80 million).

Relating to the housing area of the Duong Van Minh believers in North Eastern Vietnam (Picture 2) the statistics also show the number of to be approximately 50 000 Hmongs in Cao Bang, 17 500 in Bac Kan, 17 000 in Tuyen Quang and 5000 in Thai Nguyen.



Picture 2: Duong Van Minh Believers living in North Eastern Region of Vietnam (Tuyen Quang, Bac Kan, Cao Bang and Thai Nguyen)

Beginning in the late 1980s, many Hmong started to move from Northern Vietnam to the Central Highlands for economic reasons and, for some, to escape religious persecution.

The Hmong in Vietnam has a distinct culture and set of customs. Traditionally relying on shifting agriculture, the Hmongs have difficulty adapting to the Vietnamese government's inconsistent policy of discouraging nomadic behavior and shifting agriculture. Local government units have issued "sổ đỏ" (red registers), i.e., allocating crop land through land-use permits to a number of Hmong families. Even for those with red registers, the local government arbitrarily dictates how they may use the allocated land. For example, several Duong Van Minh believers agreed to have SSFO erected on their allocated land without asking for official approval because the structure is small, typically occupying an area smaller than a pigsty. When the government orders them to tear down the outbuildings, they see religious discrimination in the government's policy.

The government's unwise economic, cultural and social policies have led the Hmong to believe that the government wants to discriminate against and oppress ethnic minorities. Dr. Tran Huu Son, Chief of the Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Lao Cai Province, observed the consequences of the government's blundering policy towards the Hmong religious practices:

*"In reality, from 1955 until now, in the Northern mountainous region, there have been many wrong assessments and consequently, many wrong directives. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, due to the lack of maturity, led by leftism and by the consideration that the minorities' ceremonies are archaic, many local government units forbade traditional celebrations. Many officials saw sacred forests and shrines at spring heads as superstition,*

<sup>9</sup> 2009 Census of Population and Residences in Vietnam. Hanoi, pp 134-225. Accessed on March 11, 2014, <http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=512&idmid=5&ItemID=10798>



*leading to actions for de-sacring the sacred forest, raging on deforestation, causing serious environmental degradation. In the 1970s and 1980s, local officials viewed shamans as purveyors of superstition and forbade them from conducting their activities. This disrupted the Hmong's culture, causing them to forgo their traditions and follow instead the Vang Chu belief..."*<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, Dr. Tran Huu Son continued to urge the Hmongs to change their wedding and funeral traditions because he viewed those as archaic.<sup>11</sup> Yet, when Mr. Duong Van Minh showed the Hmong how to replace archaic wedding and funeral rites with modern practices, the government forbids this and wants the Hmong to go back to their outdated ways. This is merely an arbitrary measure by the government in trying to deal with the upsurge in the conversion of Hmong to evangelical denominations.

#### **4.2. Religious issues of Hmong people since the late 1980s**

Aside from ancestor worship, the Hmong believe in several gods and spirits, e.g., the local god of the soil, the god protecting each village, the spirits of trees and stones, etc., but they do not have a god for all Hmong. As previously stated, the government's policy of forbidding traditional Hmong religious belief led to numerous Hmongs converting to Protestants after they listened to evangelical programs broadcast from abroad in the late 1980s. The government perceived Protestant churches to be American religions that serve the United States' goal of a “*diễn biến hòa bình*” (peaceful evolution) of Vietnamese society aiming to overthrow of the Communist government in Vietnam. Consequently, the government of Vietnam concentrates on eradicating Protestantism from late 1980's on.

In a widespread book published by the state-sanctioned publishing house in 2001, an official considers Protestant denominations and the Hmong's Vàng Chử faith to be "illegal":<sup>12</sup>

*“In the 1980s, in the North-western and North-eastern regions of North Vietnam, there appeared a movement for the re-establishment of an independent Hmong State by the Hmong minority, which would include those living in China, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. They also spread a religion called “Vàng Chử” meaning “the King appears”. This religion also worships Jesus Christ and makes the Bible in the H’mong language its dogma. However, its rituals and organisational structure are completely different from common Evangelicalism, especially from the sects introduced into Vietnam earlier. “Vàng Chử” is based on the tradition of the H’mong people, who were, like the Vietnamese, conquered by the Han. At first, “Vàng Chử” was a religion of the H’mong. But later, it joined Catholicism to gain a more formal status. Afterwards it turned to Evangelism for the latter seems more suitable. Up to now, “Vàng Chử” has been evangelised. However, since it does not have a*

---

<sup>10</sup> **A number of issues in preserving, developing positive factors in the campaign on eradication of archaic customs in traditional culture in mountainous regions' culture in Lao Cai** („Một số vấn đề bảo tồn, phát huy yếu tố tích cực vận động xoá bỏ tập tục lạc hậu trong văn hoá truyền thống ở vùng cao“), Dr. Tran Huu Son, Chief of the Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Lao Cai Province, 27/10/2008, <http://www.vanhoalaocai.vn/1989/TinChiTiet/Mot-so-van-de-bao-ton-phat-huy-yeu-to-tich-cuc-van-dong-xoa-bo-tap-tuc-lac-hau-trong-van-hoa-truyen-thong-o-vung-cao.pvd>

<sup>11</sup> **Working with ethnic minorities to change a number of archaic customs** (“Vận động đồng bào các dân tộc khắc phục một số phong tục tập quán lạc hậu”), Dr. Tran Huu Son, Chief of the Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Lao Cai Province, 5/2/2008, <http://www.vanhoalaocai.vn/1393/TinChiTiet/Van-dong-dong-bao-cac-dan-toc-khac-phuc-mot-so-phong-tuc-tap-quan-lac-hau.pvd>

<sup>12</sup> “Religious Problems in Vietnam: Questions and Answers”, English book by Nguyen Minh Quang, a researcher on religion, Thế Giới Publishing House, Hanoi, 2001

*legal organisation or society, no matter how it is called, it is an illegitimate missionary body.*

*Up to now, the so-called religions of "Vàng Chử" and "Thìn Hùng" have relied on the dogma of Evangelism to be spread among the ethnic minorities in North Vietnam, especially in the North-western region. Their operation is illegal. Nominally, they are religions. In fact, they are far from this nature. All Evangelical pastors and preachers should be recognized by the State. Yet, "Vàng Chử" and "Thìn Hùng" are practised illegally. The practitioners do not follow the dogma and rules of Evangelism and do not observe the baptismal rituals and do not have pastors. The areas of their operation are not approved by the local government. During their operation, "Vàng Chử" and "Thìn Hùng" stir splits among ethnic groups and encourage ethnic minorities not to fulfil their citizen's obligations. They demand the establishment of another fatherland. They also use some superstitions to frighten and deceive the ethnic minorities whose educational standard remains very low. These two "religions" have become highly politicised reactionary organisations. In China, "Vàng Chử" is outlawed.*

*In 1989, the 32nd Assembly of Evangelism did not allow the practising of "Vàng Chử" and "Thìn Hùng" nor recognise them as members of its Church. In the Central Highlands, since the FULRO was smashed, Evangelism has been propagated illegally among the ethnic minorities and has seen a significant development in its membership.*

Obviously the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam has directly led the government and social forces in an assault on Christianity and Vàng Chử. Mr. Dao Duy Tung, member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Vietnam, signed Directive No. 45-CT/TW on September 23, 1994, concerning needed activities in the Hmong areas. The directive considered the Christian religions:<sup>13</sup>

*"Taking advantage of the extremely difficult life of the people, their poverty, and archaic, outmoded customs that are yet to be stamped out, Christianity, Evangelicalism and the Vang Chu religion have been expanding. A number of individuals have been using their authority, religious doctrine, and superstition, to coerce and mislead people, causing serious consequences in a number of locations... Concurrently, adversarial forces have a strategy, plans, manpower and concrete measures allowing them to use this opportune time to sabotage our country's revolutionary achievements."*

While Mr. Dao Duy Tung did not reveal who are the adversaries or their concrete measures for sabotaging the revolutionary government's work, he did announce countermeasures, including isolating and detaining Hmong Christians and Vang Chu followers, and *"denying individuals and organizations, including foreign non-government organizations, access to areas where ethnic minorities engage in unsanctioned religious activities"* :

*The government's tactics involve isolating those who "under religious guise, use superstition, deceit, causing disunity within families, clans, or villages". The government supports clan elders in bringing these people before public critique on their wrong doings, without relying on arrests. Those who commit crimes with serious consequences shall be persecuted in compliance with the law. When judging these, we must gather sufficient evidence, charge the correct perpetrators with the crimes specified by law, bring clan elders, local dignitaries and the local populace to our viewpoint so that the government gains broad popular support. (ibid.)*

---

<sup>13</sup> **Directive regarding a number of activities in Hmong ethnic areas** ("Chỉ thị về một số công tác ở vùng dân tộc Mông"), No. 45-CT/TW, Secretariat of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Vietnam, 23/9/1994, website of the Vietnames National Parliament, [http://www.na.gov.vn/sach\\_qh/chinhhsachpl/phan1/p1\\_iv\\_12.html](http://www.na.gov.vn/sach_qh/chinhhsachpl/phan1/p1_iv_12.html)



In 1999, when being criticized by the international community for Vietnam's expanding campaign against evangelical churches, the Communist Party established the "Steering Committee 184" to adjust the implementation of its religious policy in view of the need for closer relations with Western countries whose people include Protestants. In a top secret document issued in 1999, the Steering Committee 184 observed: <sup>14</sup>

*As our international relations are expanded, the Christians in the minority areas have additional resources and finances from foreign Christian organizations and a number of the evangelists have additional tools to use to entice the masses to follow the Christian religion. According to the Christians, if you follow America you get help, the Soviet Union has collapsed, socialism is about finished – follow the Party and the Revolution and you will always be poor. Only by following the Lord can you escape your poverty. The highland peoples need their own land and need to establish their own country and resist the invasion of the Vietnamese, and so on. Some evangelists even spread superstition, and scare people with stories about the end of the world, use force and threats to coerce people to follow the Christian religion. Because of this, the development of Christianity in the minority areas seems exploitative and takes on the appearance of political opposition and is fraught with the danger of causing social unrest, dividing the peoples, and alienating them far from our regime. The minority peoples, for a whole variety of reasons, have followed the Christian religion and don't understand the poisonous plot of the evil gang. As for our leaders, cadres and Party members, they emphasize the dangers of exploitation by the Christian religion, and vigorously pursue the work of secretly following those who would organize counterrevolution, desiring to wipe out the Christian religion, the earlier the better. Using the methods of "fighting" the contagion of Christianity in the minority areas (such as – using force to make people renounce their religion, fining people, arresting and confining missionaries to prevent their activities) has the opposite effect of making the people even more curious to listen to the exploiters, and the evil gang tries even harder to twist and drag people to follow Christianity. Actually the numbers grow more slowly if we have a relaxed policy, and if we crack down hard, Christianity grows faster.*

According numerous Vietnamese government documents, Mr. Duong Van Minh had been a follower of the Vang Chu faith which is a Hmong variant of the evangelical religions<sup>15 16</sup>. But among the Duong Van Minh believers that VETO! has interviewed several had not heard of the Vang Chu faith. In any case, the Duong Van Minh faith includes a Christian element, since the cross is used in the funeral rite. Duong Van Minh believers view God as the Creator in traditional Hmong beliefs and identify the cross with the deity crossbow in Hmong mythology.

### 4.3. Impact of the Duong Van Minh religion

The exact number of believers is not known. A number of believers believe that there are 10 000 of them. According to a document issued by the Steering Committee for Northwestern

---

<sup>14</sup> "Program 184B - Developing the Economy and Culture, Normalizing Society and Building Political Infrastructure in the Mountainous Regions Where Minority Peoples are Christian Believers" [TOP SECRET], Steering Committee 184, Hanoi, 05/03/1999, translated by Freedom House

<sup>15</sup> **The trust of Hmong ethnics** ("Niềm tin yêu của đồng bào dân tộc Mông"), Ủy Ban Dân tộc (Committee for Ethnic Affairs), Ethnic online, 25/8/2005, <http://cema.gov.vn/modules.php?mid=2457&name=Content&op=details>

<sup>16</sup> **Government in Lung Ga Hamlet, Cao Bang Province advocates for renouncing evil religion** ("Xóm Lũng Gà, tỉnh Cao Bằng vận động bà con từ bỏ tà đạo"), website of the Communist Party of Vietnam, July 24/7/2008, [http://www.cpv.org.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co\\_id=0&cn\\_id=239078](http://www.cpv.org.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=0&cn_id=239078)

Region<sup>17</sup> of the Vietnamese Communist Party in April 2012, there are at least 6 000 Duong Van Minh believers in the four North-Eastern provinces:<sup>18</sup>

*“After over 20 years of operation, the illegal Duong Van Minh organization has grown in Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen and Tuyen Quang to 1032 households, 6226 individuals, all Hmong, from 44 hamlets, 34 villages, 1 small town in 16 districts. Among them, there are 21 cadres in hamlets, 4 prestigious persons, 1 member of the village’s People’s Council, 1 secretary of the youth organization, 5 persons of political organizations, 3 policemen and 16 members of the Communist Party.”*

This document reveals the Party's concern about its loss of influence among party members, government employees, and political organizations that are the Party's satellites:

*“It is noteworthy that a number of government officials (hamlet chief and deputy chief, policemen, party members, ...) show support for the illegal Duong Van Minh organization.”*

So the suppression of the Duong Van Minh faith could therefore be politically motivated.

#### **4.4. About Mr. Duong Van Minh**

Mr. Duong Van Minh, a Hmong, was born in 1961 in Cao Bang and initially lived in Cao Bang. Later, he moved to Ngoi Sen Hamlet, Yen Lam Village, Ham Yen District, Tuyen Quang Province.

The Duong Van Minh faith first appeared in 1989 at the height of the government's crackdown on evangelical churches and suffered from that crackdown.

VETO! interviewed Mr. Duong Van Minh twice. The first interview was on January 20, 2014, when he was in Hospital 198 of Ministry for Public Security in Hanoi, to ask him about his kidney problem and his prison conditions. The second interview took place on February 5, 2014, when Mr. Duong Van Minh learned that no Hanoi hospital would agree to give him a dialysis.

On March 16, 2014, Mr. Duong Van Minh wrote an authorization for VETO! to present his case and the persecution of Duong Van Minh believers to the United Nations, international organizations, and the international community.<sup>19</sup>

##### **4.4.1 Belief**

In 1989, Mr. Duong Van Minh suddenly told his wife that he was God's youngest son and God had sent him to instruct mankind for 3 months. God told him that the Hmong worship of spirits had come to an end and shamans were no longer needed. In 1990 Mr. Duong Van Minh had a gate erected and a signpost showing a cross and stars. Later, he had a building erected, with a cross on the roof, and invited Hmong people to join him in prayers to God. He instructed them that they should go to medical clinics for treatment when they are sick. He

---

<sup>17</sup> It is unclear why the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region is now responsible for the North-Eastern Provinces.

<sup>18</sup> **Concluding Communiqué of the Conference on Implementing Measures to Prevent and Eventually Eradicate the Illegal Organization Dương Văn Minh in Some Northwestern Provinces** (“Thông báo kết luận Hội nghị Triển khai các giải pháp ngăn chặn, tiến tới xóa bỏ đối với tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh trên địa bàn một số tỉnh Tây Bắc”) [SECRET], No. 09-TB/BCĐTB, Central Presidium of the Steering Committee for the Northwestern Region, Communist Party Vietnam, 25/4/2012

<sup>19</sup> Authorization for VETO to present his case and the persecution of Duong Van Minh adherents to the UN, international organizations, and the international community, March 16, 2014 (available at VETO!)

counseled them to love one another.<sup>20</sup> Later, the government seized the building and turned it into a school.

The government's anti-Duong Van Minh material claims that he had predicted the end of the world following the explosion of the earth in 2000. According to Duong Van Minh believers, Mr. Duong Van Minh only talked about the end of the Hmong's spirits worship, and he also said that after the 3-month instruction period, he had become again a normal human being. The government's accusation that believers brought him money and gifts, hoping that he would call on spirits to cure illness, have no basis. The believers consider the government's slanderous material to be lies and lying is contrary to the Hmong's love of truth. A few adherent families (not the majority) stopped sending their children to school after teachers followed the government's line because they do not want their children to learn how to lie. Some families refused any kind of government assistance after the government spread lies about the Duong Van Minh faith being the cause of their impoverishment. The government cited these cases as evidence that the Duong Van Minh faith intends to sabotage government policy (see the case of Thào Quán Mua, Section 7.2).

#### 4.4.2. Arbitrary imprisonment for the first time

In 1990, public security officers of Ha Tuyen Province (today Tuyen Quang Province) arrested Mr. Duong Van Minh and one of his followers, Mr. Dao Dinh Hoang. A protocol on confiscated personal items of Mr. Duong Van Minh written on April 30, 1990 listed: a picture frame, a vase, plastic flowers, 2 sheets with Chinese characters and a package of sugar (sic!). The Ha Tuyen court sentenced them to 5 years in prison and 2 years of house arrest for "spreading superstition with serious consequence" and "defrauding others" under Articles 157, 199, 141 of the criminal code. VETO! believes that the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Duong Van Minh is political motivated at the height of the persecution campaign against ethnic Christians in the 1980s and 1990s.

Upon his release and the end of the house arrest period in 1997, Mr. Duong Van Minh hid in the forest, fearing an attempt on his life.

In 2001, he returned to his home. He built a rattan chair with the picture of a green cross on its back. He was building a base for the chair when the government confiscated the chair. In view of the chair's symbolism, 6 Hmong sent a petition to the People's Committee in Ham Yen District, Tuyen Quang Province, requesting the chair's return. The petition cited the fact that Mr. Duong Van Minh *"had not done anything bad during the past 6 years and he had no intention to overthrow the government or to discredit the government"*. Mr. Duong Văn Tu, Ngòi Sen hamlet chief endorsed the petition.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, the government harassed the petitioners. Years later Mr. Tu was arrested on October 10, 2013 (see 7.1).

In 2001 Mr. Duong Van Minh began teaching Hmong believers a new way to live and to conduct rites such as birthdays, weddings, funerals and New Year's celebrations. Funerals are the most important events for Duong Van Minh believers. The government's assaults on and destruction of SSFO are all related to funerals.

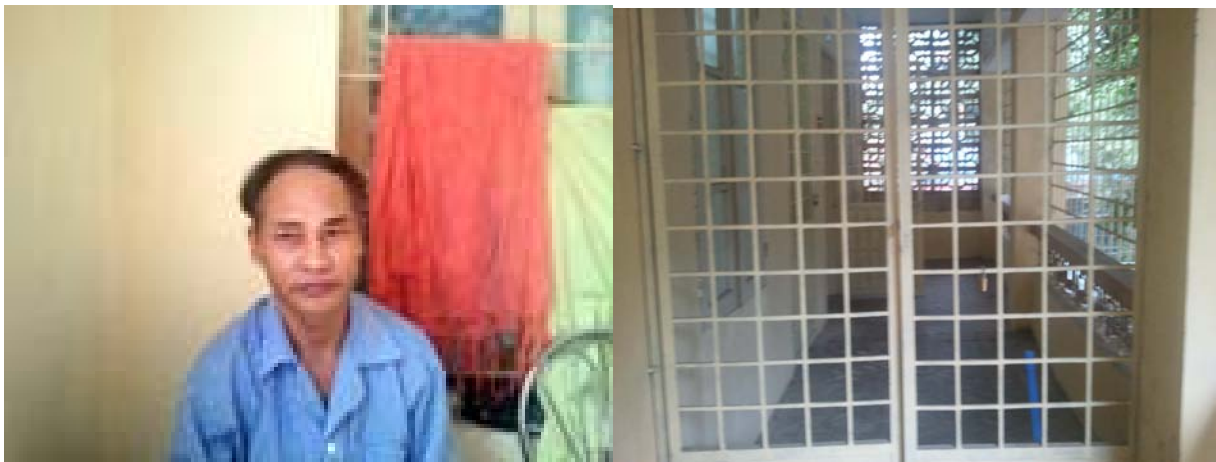
---

<sup>20</sup> Report on the Duong Van Minh Reform, sent by a Hmong believer on May 5, 2014 (available at VETO!). We interviewed him on March 13, /2014.

<sup>21</sup> Messrs. Duong Văn Tu, Duong Văn Phùng, Đào Đh Hoăng, Thào A Cháng, Thào Quán Mùa, Đong Văn Dũng signed this petition on October 2, 2006 (Available at VETO!)

#### 4.4.3. Arbitrary imprisonment for the second time

Mr. Duong Van Minh suffers serious renal insufficiency and needs 3 dialysis sessions each week. He also suffers from arthritis and a weak heart.<sup>22</sup> In February 2012 he clandestinely went to Hanoi for dialysis. After Duong Van Minh believers in the 4 provinces erected 24 SSFO concurrently in four Provinces Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen on May 16, 2013, on June 5, 2013 public security issued the order to track him down because they believed that he had called for the erection of the outbuildings. On June 17, 2013, they found out that he had gone to Khánh Lương Hospital in Hanoi. As he was returning to his rented room from the hospital, public security officers seized him and took him to the Public Security Ministry's Hospital 198 (No. 9 Trần Bình, Cầu Giấy District, Hanoi). Subsequently, public security officers searched his rented room, arrested his daughter Dương Thị Iê and his sister-in-law Đào Thị Sái, and brought them back to Tuyên Quang. They physically attacked two other believers, Messrs. Dương Văn Páo and Đào Văn Tính, and confiscated their cell phones.<sup>23</sup> On June 24, 2013, public security in Tuyên Quang issued the notification about the end of the search for Mr. Duong Van Minh.<sup>24</sup>



Picture 3 & 4: Mr. Duong Van Minh in the confinement area of the Police Hospital 198 in Hanoi  
(Picture taken on 24/1/2014)

Public security officers incarcerated Mr. Duong Van Minh in Hospital 198 from June 17, 2013 until January 29, 2014 without an arrest warrant from the Public Security Ministry or a court's order (**photo 3**). Mr. Duong Van Minh had asked several times that they should either release him or try him in court, but got no reply. Hospital staff only knew him as "a target of public security" or an "indicted person", but never learned the specific nature of his "crime".<sup>25</sup>

During his entire hospital confinement, he was not allowed to leave his confinement area that consisted of 2 rooms behind doors and windows with metal bars (**photo 4**). Three public security officers watched him day and night; they stayed in the first room. Mr. Duong Van Minh and a relative stayed in the other room (another relative may take a turn to stay with him to relieve the first relative). With the public security officers' approval, relatives may visit Mr. Duong Van Minh.

<sup>22</sup> Hospital visit's slip issued by Hospital 198 on January 24, 2014 (Available at VETO!)

<sup>23</sup> Interview of D, Duong Van Minh adherent, Feb 7, 2014

<sup>24</sup> Notification of the end of the search for Dương Văn Minh, by public security for Hàm Yên District, Tuyên Quang Province, June 24, 2013 (Available at VETO!)

<sup>25</sup> Interview of D, ebd

At least two Hmong believers were arrested when they attempted to visit him: Messrs. Thào Quán Mua and Dương Văn Tu (see 7.1 and 7.2), on the charge of "abusing the right to freedom and democracy" under the criminal code's Article 258.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.4.4. Preventing from accessing medical treatment

On January 24, 2014, Mr. Duong Van Minh requested permission to celebrate the Lunar New Year in Tuyen Quang Province with his family. Public security agreed to let him visit his family from January 29, 2014 to February 2, 2014, provided he signed an agreement "*to go and return on time, not leave his neighborhood, not organize big celebrations, not erect gates, not erect stages, only use Vietnam's national flag, not display banners, stars, and signs that are not approved by local authorities, and not organize noisy dancing and singing*". He refused to sign the promissory form.<sup>27</sup> On January 29, 2014, public security let him visit his family during 3 days. At the end of this period, public security officers brought him back to Hanoi on February 2, 2014. However, Mr. Duong Van Minh refused to return to his confinement area in Hospital 198. Public security retaliated by refusing him dialysis treatment in the hospital.

Although he had not requested admission to Hospital 198 or signed any kind of payment and fees agreement, public security demanded that he should pay Hospital 198 an amount of 132 million VND (approximately 6600 USD) before they allowed him to leave the hospital. This is a stupendously large sum for an impoverished Hmong family. Through believers' contributions, his family paid the hospital the required sum on February 10, 2014.<sup>28</sup>

Between January 29 and February 19, 2014 he got only one dialysis treatment, the only one during the period in which he resisted confinement. The February 19 treatment took place only because hospital staff had already inserted tubes into his body by the time public security officers showed up to stop the treatment. Public security intimidated staff in other hospitals after his relatives inquired at those hospitals, and Mr. Duong Van Minh could not get any dialysis treatment. His condition was fairly serious because he needs 3 treatments each week.

#### 4.4.5. Meetings with the US and EU diplomats

With VETO! assistance, Mr. Duong Van Minh met with a U.S. Embassy representative on February 7, 2014 (**Picture 5**), and with a European Union representative on February 14, 2014 (**Picture 6**) in Hanoi to inform them of his personal difficulties and the plight of Duong Van Minh believers. On February 11, 2014, Mr. Hứa Kiến Thiết, Director of public security for Tuyen Quang, met with his sister-in-law to propose treatment for him at Hospital 198. Mr. Duong Van Minh refused because he did not want public security surveillance. From February 20 onwards, hospitals in Hanoi no longer refused to treat him, probably as a result of Western embassies' support for Mr. Duong Van Minh.

<sup>26</sup> **Two Elements of the Duong Van Minh organization arrested** ("Bắt 2 đối tượng thuộc tổ chức Dương Văn Minh"), website The Inspector, Oct 15, 2013 (in Vietnamese)

[http://thanhtra.com.vn/bat-2-doi-tuong-thuoc-to-chuc-duong-van-minh\\_t221c1144n65551.html](http://thanhtra.com.vn/bat-2-doi-tuong-thuoc-to-chuc-duong-van-minh_t221c1144n65551.html)

<sup>27</sup> "Promissory form" prepared by public security on January 24, 2014 (Handwritten document available at VETO!)

<sup>28</sup> Receipt for paid fees, Hospital198, Feb 10, 2014 (Available at VETO!)





Picture 5 & 6: Mr. Dương Văn Minh met representatives of the US Embassy (l) on 7/2/2014 (with Att. Nguyen Thi Duong Ha in the background) and of the EU Delegation (r) on 14/2/2014 in Hanoi.

#### 4.5. "The new way of life"

In 1986, the Communist Party of Vietnam instituted a "modernization" campaign to mitigate the sorry state of the economy (later known as "market economy guided by socialism"). The government promoted in the countryside the need for modernization and the eradication of outdated, backward customs and superstition.

Duong Van Minh believers also embraced "the new way" that they considered being consistent with the government's policy. They could not understand the government's ordering them to go back to backward customs. They followed Mr. Duong Van Minh's teachings on new ways for conducting rites at birthdays, funerals, weddings and lunar New Year's celebrations.<sup>29</sup>

The following are Mr. Duong Van Minh's 12 guidelines for his followers:<sup>30</sup>

- a) Do not drink alcohol, tea and beer;
- b) Do not gamble in order to keep your savings;
- c) Do not steal;
- d) Do not quarrel;
- e) Do not scream, swear, and engage in physical violence;
- f) Do not kill, rob, burn houses;
- g) Do not fight over land;
- h) Do not commit adultery;
- i) Do not use trickery to get food and drinks;
- j) Do not use drugs or engage in prostitution;
- k) Do not eat blood, whether cooked or uncooked; do not eat meat from animals that were strangled or died accidentally;
- l) Support and love one another in difficult times.

#### 5. Viewpoints of the Communist Party and Government in Vietnam

The Communist Party of Vietnam is the ruling party and has the monopoly on power in Vietnam. At each administrative level, authorities are advised by the Party at the same level.

<sup>29</sup> Document "Grievance" submitted to Prime Minister Nguyen tan Dung on Oct. 16, 2013 (copy available at VETO!)

<sup>30</sup> Excerpt from "Proposal submitted to the Village People's Committee", Lý Văn Ninh signed on behalf of Hmong residents of Nam Tuấn Village, Hòa An District, Cao Bằng, July 8, 2012 (copy of handwritten document available at VETO!)



Directives against the Duong Van Minh religion came from Party's Central Committee i.e. Steering Committee for Northwestern Region and are disseminated to party organizations in provinces, districts, villages and hamlets. Party's officials of level must advice and monitor the corresponding government's implementation of the Party's order to "eradicate the illegal Duong Van Minh organization". The role of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs is unclear because it has no executive power (see 5.4.1).

The documents listed below show the chain of commands to destroy the SSFO of the Duong Van Minh religion in the Van Thu Hamlet, beginning with the Steering Committee at the Central Committee of the Communist Party and ending with the People's Committee of District Hoa An (**See Table 1**):

Steering Committee for Northwestern Region (see 5.1) → Communist Party in Cao Bang Province (see 5.3.2) → Communist Party of Hoa An District (see 5.4.2.1) → People's Committee of Hoa An District (see 5.4.2.2) → People's Committee of Nam Quang Village → People's Committee of Van Thu Hamlet.

Administrative Level	System of the Communist Party of Vietnam	Advising Competence	Government System
Central ↓	Central Presidium of the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region (Ban Chỉ đạo Tây Bắc)	→	Prime minister, Ministry of Interior [Government Committee for Religious Affairs (Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ) ?]
Province ↓	Communist Party of Vietnam in Cao Bang Province (Tỉnh ủy Cao Bằng)	→	People's Committee of Cao Bang Province (Ủy Ban Nhân dân tỉnh Cao Bằng)
District ↓	Communist Party of Vietnam in Hoa an District (Huyện ủy huyện Hòa An)	→	People's Committee of Hoa an District, (Ủy Ban Nhân dân huyện Hòa An)
Village	Nam Quang Village (xã Nam Quang)		
Hamlet	Van Thu Hamlet (xóm Văn Thụ)		

**Table 1: Directive hierarchy in Vietnam**

### 5.1. Conference of the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region

The Steering Committee for Northwestern Region is a committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in charge of the policy for political security, social order and safety, economic development and social welfare for the provinces located in the Northwest part of Vietnam. The Chair of the Northwest Steering Committee is the Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

On April 5, 2012, the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region convened a conference on *"Implementing measures to prevent and eventually eradicate the illegal organization Duong Van Minh on some areas of the North West Province"* to deal with Duong Van Minh Religion;<sup>31</sup> because the Communist Party believed that the previous direction to "eradicate" the Duong

<sup>31</sup> It is unclear why and since when the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region is responsible for the Northeastern provinces: Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen and Tuyen Quang. Many official documents and web articles mention this committee in connection to suppressive actions against the Duong Van Minh religion in Northeastern region. The above mentioned document reported about a conference taken place in Province Cao Bang on April 5, 2012 with attendants coming from the four Northeastern provinces.

Van Minh Religion was not well coordinated and the implementation were not thoroughly executed:

*„The actions to stop the activities of illegal Duong Van Minh organization have several limitations. One reason for this situation is the lack of a legal basis for resolving the activities of Duong Van Minh organization, the coordination of directives between the central agencies and localities were not synchronized; the tasks of detecting and handling of negative behavior and violations of the objects in the illegal organization Duong Van Minh were not yet resolutely and thoroughly ".*<sup>32</sup>

According to the Concluding Communiqué of this special meeting<sup>33</sup> the participants list includes leaders of agencies involved in the plan to eradicate the Duong Van Minh Religion:

- Central Committee of People Mobilization,
- Committee for Ethnic Minorities,
- Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front,
- General Directorate of Security II (Ministry of Public Security) ,
- Government Committee for Religious Affairs (Ministry of Interior) ,
- The Communist Party, the People 's Committees, the authorized branches and divisions of the Provinces of Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang.

The said communiqué also stated that the reason for the meeting was the Duong Van Minh religion has not been destroyed and they are now demanding that the freedom of religion and belief be respected:

*After 20 years of our continuous fighting to stop them, yet so far that organization (Duong Van Minh) still exists, more complex elements emerged, they tend to operate openly, challenging the government authority, and require that their organization be recognized. (ibid.)*

The conference has designed plan for propaganda and plan to stop and eradicate the Duong Van Minh religion, the following measures were included:

- *Promote activities to fight against the illegal Duong Van Minh organization. Competent forces shall advice the Party, state agencies shall classify members of the Duong Van Minh organization (such as the ringleader, those are long time members, those follow because of ignorance, coercion or intimidation) and to devise appropriate solutions for each class.*
- *Actively combating and resolving those in violation of the law;*
- *Actively attacking the hotspots which manifest the opposition to the government, publicly claim or demand things which are against the policies of the Party and State;*
- *Consistently eradicate " the sheds for storing funeral objects " ;*
- *All festivals shall be in conformance with traditions or customs and not contrary to the regulations of the State. (ibid.)*

**(see Document 1: 120425 Communiqué of Steering Committee NorthWestRegion)**

---

<sup>32</sup> **Order of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party in Cao Bang Province regarding the prevention and erasing of the illegal organization Dương Văn Minh on the Cao Bang Province** (“Chỉ thị của Ban Thường vụ Tỉnh ủy về Ngăn chặn, xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp DVM trên địa bàn tỉnh Cao Bằng”), No 37-CT/TU, Communist Party in Cao Bang Province, 31/5/2012 (Document available at VETO! Office)

<sup>33</sup> **Concluding Communiqué of the Conference on the Deployment of measures to prevent in order to eradicate the illegal organization Duong Van Minh in some Northwestern Provinces** (“Thông báo kết luận Hội nghị Triển khai các giải pháp ngăn chặn, tiến tới xóa bỏ đối với tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh trên địa bàn một số tỉnh Tây Bắc”) [SECRET], No. 09-TB/BCĐTB, Central Presidium of the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 25/4/2012

## 5.2. Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions, and Decree No. 92/2012/NĐ-CP

Vietnam does not yet have a law on religions. Therefore, restrictions on religious freedom in Vietnam are based on ordinances similar to bylaws, which are not established by parliamentary vote and only issued by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly. Therefore Vietnamese ordinances on religions are not in compliance with article 18 (par. 3) ICCPR.

Additionally the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions of 2004<sup>34</sup> provides a very narrow definition of beliefs and religions which is not in compliance with par. 1 and 2 on belief and religion of the General Comments CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 of the Human Rights Committee.

The Communist Party and Government of Vietnam don't consider the activities of Duong Van Minh religion as "activities which arise from religious beliefs" in accordance with the definition in this Ordinance, when citing its par. 1, article 3:

*"Activities which arise from religious beliefs express themselves as ancestor worship; memorializing and honoring those who have rendered great services to the country and the community; the worship of divinities and traditional symbols as well as other folk beliefs and activities that represent fine, valuable historical, cultural, moral and social values."* (ibid.)

Either they don't consider the Duong Van Minh religion as a "religious organization" in accordance with the definition of this Ordinance, when citing its par. 3, article 3:

*"A religious organization is an assembly of believers of the same tenets, cannons, rites, and has a clear organizational structure recognized by the State."* (ibid.)

In addition to the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions, the activities of the Duong Van religion is also limited by the Decree No. 92/2012/NĐ-CP of the Government dated November 8, 2012, regarding *"Detailed Regulations and Implementing Measures of Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions"*<sup>35</sup>. This Decree replaces the first Decree No. 22/2005/ND-CP dated March 1, 2005 and restricts the prerequisites for religious groups to apply for permit. Currently, the Communist Party and the Government in Vietnam are using par. 3, Article 5 (requisite conditions for registration pertaining to religious activities), and par. 1, Article 6 (requisite conditions for registration for religious operations) of Decree 92/2012/NĐ-CP to conclude that:

*"The Duong Van Minh Organization is not eligible for registration and for conducting religious activities. Therefore, Duong Van Minh organization is not recognized as a legitimate religious organization."*<sup>36</sup>

It is noteworthy that since 2006 followers of Duong Van Minh religion has repeatedly petitioned or met the authorities at commune, district, province levels, and central government to request them ceasing the persecution and allowing Duong Van Minh religion to officially operate; but no adequate response from the authorities were received.

<sup>34</sup> Ordinance of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly (Human Rights Watch unofficial translation) No. 21/2004/PL-UBTVQH11 of June 18, REGARDING RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

<sup>35</sup> **Government Decree No. 92/2012/NĐ-CP regarding " Detailed Regulations and Implementing Measures of Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions"**, signed by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, November 8, 2012, [http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/hethongvanban?class\\_id=1&mode=detail&document\\_id=164402](http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/hethongvanban?class_id=1&mode=detail&document_id=164402)

<sup>36</sup> Document **Contents of propagandas and fight to eradicate the outlawed organization Dương Văn Minh** („Nội dung tuyên truyền, đấu tranh xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh“), Internal Letter No. 190, 01/2014 of The Committee for Propaganda and Education of the Communist Party in Tuyên Quang Province, January 2014, with stamp "document for internal circulation", 5.581 copy prints, pp 46-54

Although it has existed since 1989 the Duong Van Minh religion cannot obtain any permits; thus, it is considered as outlawed. In Vietnam the "*permit for conducting religious activities*" and the "*permit for conducting religious operations*" are two permits each religion should obtain before one can apply for the "*permit recognizing as a religious organization with legal standing*".

### 5.3. Documents of the Communist Party in Provinces Tuyen Quang and Cao Bang

Tuyen Quang and Cao Bang are two provinces with the highest rates of Duong Van Minh believers. Within the boundaries of these two provinces, there are 15 out of a total of 24 SSFO erected in 2013; thus, the authorities of these provinces are the most enthusiastic in the campaign to eradicate the Duong Van Minh religion.

#### 5.3.1. Document of the Communist Party in Province Tuyen Quang

The document entitled "*Internal letter (serving activities in sub-divisions of the Communist Party, villages, hamlets, organized people groups)*" is a booklet with 5,581 copies stamped "Internal circulation" and was distributed to members of the Communist Party of Tuyen Quang province in January 2014. An article in this document titled "*Contents of propaganda for fighting to eliminate illegal Duong Van Minh Organization*", from page 46 to page 54.<sup>37</sup> **(Picture 7)**

This document put the Duong Van Minh's activities in charge of "proclaiming King and welcoming God":

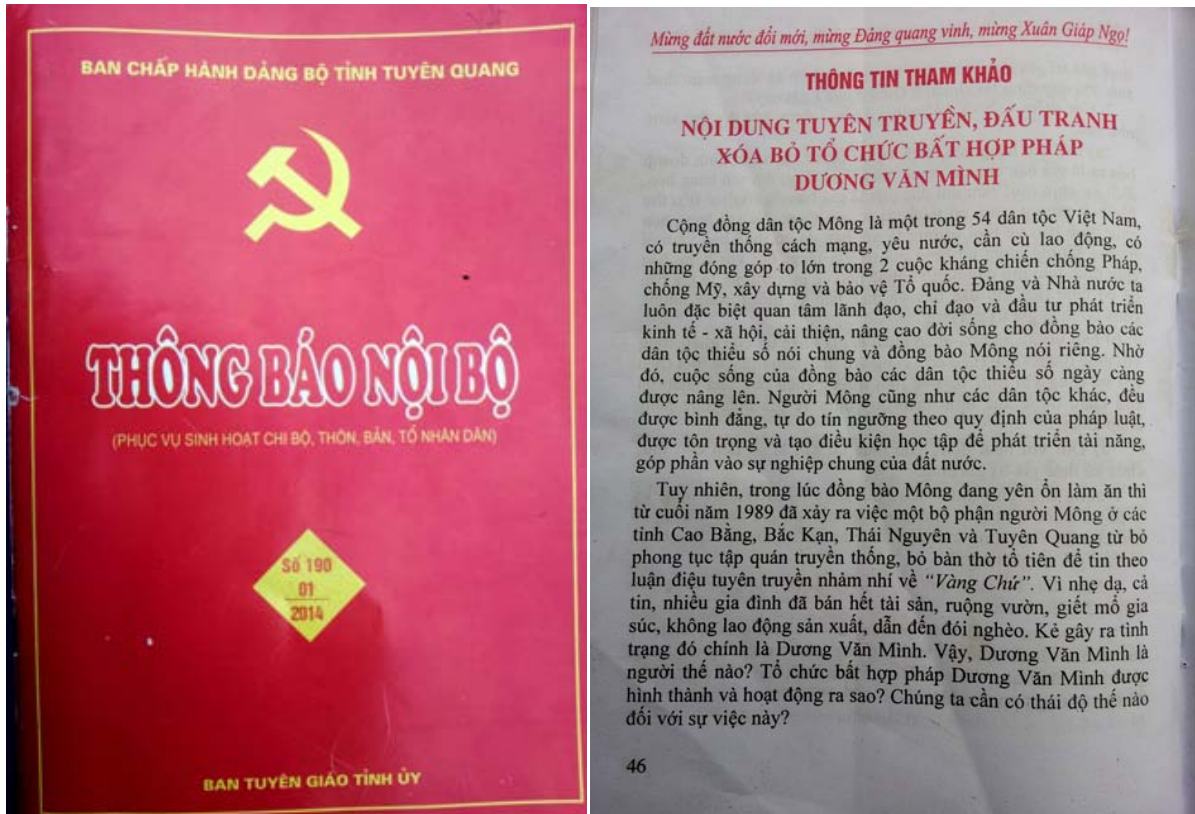
*"Those are activities propagating superstition, forming ideology of separatism, autonomy, interwoven with activities involved in belief and religion, to dupe people to make illicit profits benefiting the leaders of the organization. These activities caused disturbance regarding beliefs of the Hmong in particular, and thought, economic, cultural and social life of the peoples living in the region in general; they affected the trust of a part in the population in the Party (note: the Communist Party) and State and the healthy religious activities, and caused division amongst ethnics. Therefore, we have to resolutely fight against and eradicate this illegal organization."*(ibid. page 54).

This document instructs "*The provincial Committees for Religious Affairs to mobilize the masses for not believing and not following the Duong Van Minh organization*". It referred to Document No. 50/TGCP-TGK of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs dated February 2, 2012 to consider that "*the Duong Van Minh Organization has conducted illegal activities, infringing upon private properties, materials, labor time of the people and against the fine customs and traditions of the ethnics, causing internal disunity of the Hmong fellows*". The propaganda document mentioned above instructed "*to dismantle the illegally built sheds for storing funeral objects*", referring to document 518/TGCP-TGK of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs dated June 7, 2013.

---

<sup>37</sup> ibid.<sup>35</sup>





Picture 7: Document of the Communist Party in Province Tuyen Quang ordering the eradication of the Duong Van Minh religion

### 5.3.2. Document of the Communist Party in Province Cao Bang

The document entitled "*Directive of the Standing Committee of Provincial Communist Party regarding Deterring, Eradicating the illegal Duong Van Minh organization in Cao Bang province*" of the Communist Party of Cao Bang Province were sent to party offices, government, military personnel and associations at the local level to deter and eradicate the Duong Van Minh religion.<sup>38</sup>

This document requires public security (or police) of Cao Bang province in coordination with police of other provinces implementing the following measures:

- *Best informing about the areas and people participating in the illegal Duong Van Minh organization;*
- *Issuing plan for intimidating, summoning and fighting those who support Duong Van Minh organization;*
- *Preventing hotspots with complex problems of security and public order in the province territory;*
- *Preventing hostile forces misusing this organization to serve their plots;*
- *Instructing a properly implementation of regulation on temporary sheltering and absence, expelling from the province those, who are not local residents or people coming for temporary sheltering without legitimate reason;*

<sup>38</sup> Order of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party in Cao Bang Province regarding Deterring, Eradicating of the illegal organization Dương Văn Minh in the Cao Bang Province ("Chi thị của Ban Thường vụ Tỉnh ủy về Ngăn chặn, xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp DVM trên địa bàn tỉnh Cao Bằng"), No 37-CT/TU, Communist Party in Cao Bang Province, May 31, 2012

- *Close coordination with police of other provinces where the illegal Duong Van Minh organization operates to prevent and eradicate this organization.*

(see Document 2: 120531 Order of Communist Party of Cao Bang Province.pdf).

## 5.4. Directives of the Government

### 5.4.1. Controversial dispatch of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs

On 7 June, 2013, short after the concurrent construction of 24 SSFO of the Duong Van Minh religion, the Government Committee for Religious Affairs issued the document No. 518/TGCP-TGK which was sent to the People's Committees of Provinces Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen. It is not clear what kind of administrative dispatch it is (Picture 8).<sup>39</sup> It states:

*"The Duong Van Minh Organization is not yet recognized as a religious organization, but has already conducted activities to misuse the right to freedom of belief and religion, has illegally built SSFO against the law and the traditional customs of the ethnic Hmong, has infringed upon properties, materials, labor time, and has caused social disorder, disunity in a part of Hmong people. "*

The languages in the text bearing the order coming from a central authority to local agencies:

*"Proposed the Chairmen of the provincial People's Committees assigning to departments and agencies to research, and compare with legal regulations and regulations on the implementation of (note: policies for) a civilized lifestyle in the weddings, funerals and festivals, (note: and find out ways) to sanction".*

This dispatch required the Chairmen of the provincial People's Committees to use strong measures against Duong Van Minh organization, namely:

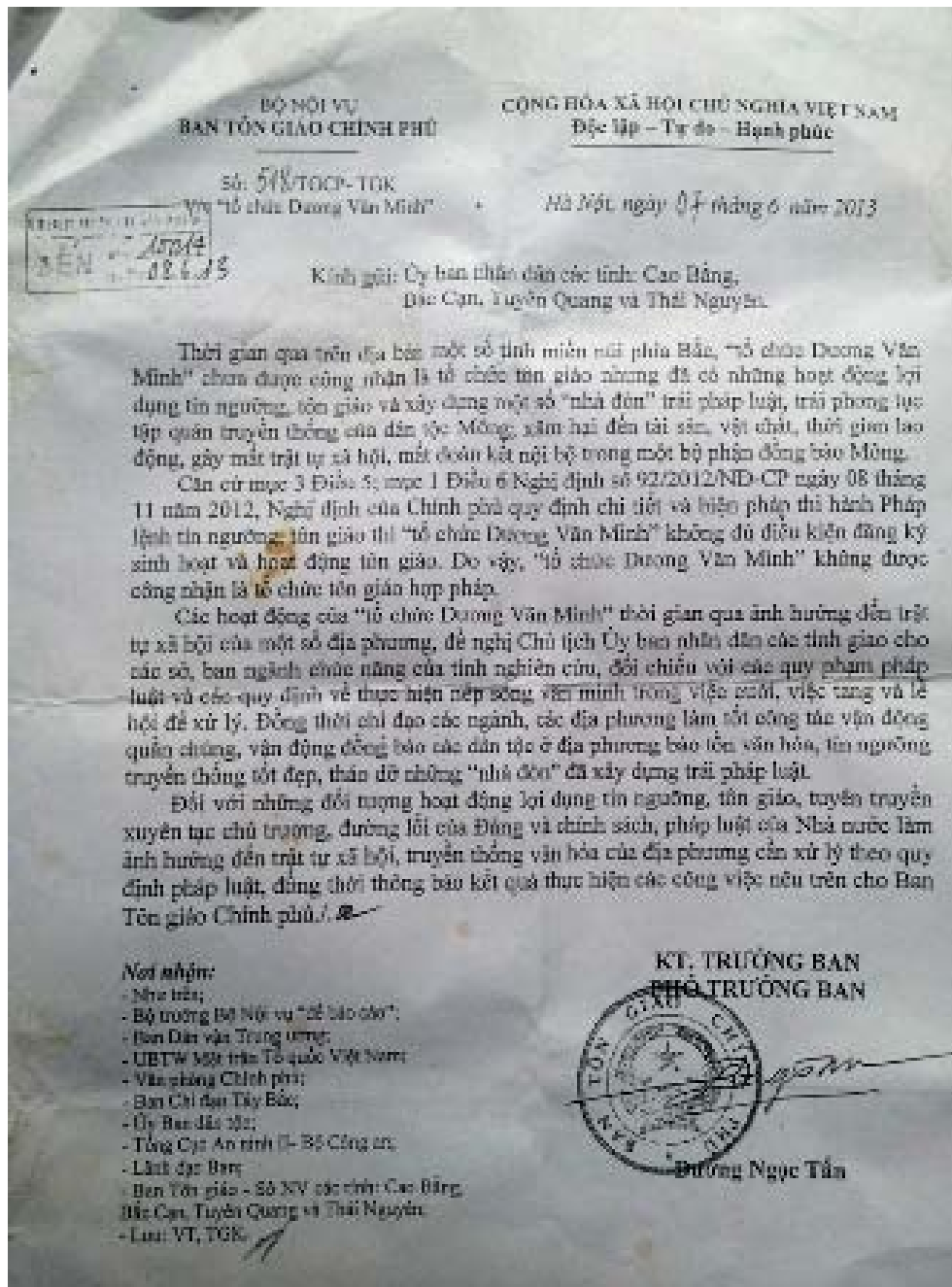
*"(...) dismantling the SSFO, which were built illegally. Those who have activities which are abusing the right to freedom of religion and belief, who have propagated slanders against the objectives and guidelines of the Party, and against the policies and laws of the State, which will affect social order, cultural traditions of the localities, should be sanctioned according to the laws and regulations. The results of the implementation of the above tasks should be reported to the Government Committee for Religious Affairs."*

The Government Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Interior is the central agency of the Government, which controls religious activities in Vietnam. Theoretically this committee only has the responsibility *"to advise and assist the Minister of Interior in the management policy toward religion in the country"*<sup>40</sup> and thus doesn't have any executive power.

<sup>39</sup> Document No. 518/TGCP-TGK Re. "Duong Van Minh organization", sent from the Government Committee for Religious Affairs to the People's Committees of the Cao Bằng, Bắc Cạn, Tuyên Quang và Thái Nguyên Provinces, June 7, 2013 (There is no information on the document form)

<sup>40</sup> Competences and Responsibilities of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, Decree No. 134/2009/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister issued on November 3, 2009, website of this committee, [http://btgcp.gov.vn/Plus.aspx/vi/News/38/0/153/0/1061/CHUC\\_NANG\\_NHIEM\\_VU\\_CUA\\_BAN\\_TON\\_GIAO\\_CHIN\\_H\\_PHU](http://btgcp.gov.vn/Plus.aspx/vi/News/38/0/153/0/1061/CHUC_NANG_NHIEM_VU_CUA_BAN_TON_GIAO_CHIN_H_PHU)





Picture 8: Directive No. 518/TGCP-TGK of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (Ministry of Internal) to the People’s Committees of Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Tuyên Quang and Thái Nguyên Provinces on 7/6/2013

But the Government Committee for Religious Affairs has concluded that the Duong Van Minh religion is an illegal organization and recommended that its SSFO shall be dismantled. This “recommendation” has a far-ranging impact on the persecution of the Duong Van Minh believers because it is quoted in various propaganda materials of the ruling Communist Party<sup>41</sup>, judgments<sup>42</sup>, newspapers<sup>43</sup> and dispatches of other state agencies<sup>44</sup>. For example, in the

<sup>41</sup> Document **Contents of propagandas and fight to eradicate the outlawed organization Dương Văn Minh** („Nội dung tuyên truyền, đấu tranh xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh“, Internal Letter No. 190, 01/2014 of The Committee for Propaganda and Education of the Communist Party in Tuyên Quang Province, January 2014, with stamp “document for internal circulation”, 5.581 copy prints, pp 46-54

letter responding to the complaints filed by Mr. Thao Quan Mua in October 2013, the Government Inspector and Head of Citizens Reception Center of the Central Communist Party and State, proposed the Hmong Christians "to follow the direction of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs per dispatch No. 518/TGCP-TGK." (See Picture 9) The reference to a not valid document has caused a feeling among the Hmong petitioners that their complaints are not seriously taken by state agencies.



Picture 9: Answer from "Citizens Reception Center of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam" to Mr. Thao Quan Mua on 7/10/2013

<sup>42</sup> Judgement No. 07/2014/HSST of the People's Court of Ham Yen District, Tuyen Quang Province, against Mr. Duong Van Tu and Mr. Ly van Dinh, March 20, 2014 (available at VETO! office)

<sup>43</sup> **Eighteen months imprisonment for a leader who has organized the building of an illegal funeral shed in Minh Huong Village**, Tuyen Quang Online, Communist Party of Vietnam in Tuyen Quang Province, March 29, 2014 <http://www.baotuyenquang.com.vn/phap-luat/an-ninh-trat-tu/18-thang-tu-cho-ke-cam-dau-xay-dung-nha-don-trai-phem-o-minh-huong-37528.html>

<sup>44</sup> Answer of Mr. Phan Van Hai, Government Inspector and Head of Citizens Reception Center of the Central Communist Party and State, to Mr. Thao Quan Mua and other 21 followers of Duong Van Minh religion on October 7, 2013 (Document available at VETO! Office)

## 5.4.2. Directives at local level

### 5.4.2.1. Instruction of the Communist Party in Hoa An District, Cao Bang Province

The Communist Party of Hoa An District, Cao Bang Province has issued Directive 18-CT/HU on February 2013 to launch a concerted campaign against the Duong Van Minh religion.<sup>45</sup> This Directive is based on two directives from higher level: from the Steering Committee for Northwestern Region (see 5.1.) and from the Communist Party of Cao Bang Province (see 5.3.2.) to:

- *Prevent, eradicate the illegal Duong Van Minh organization;*
- *Advocate those aged 16 and older to sign pledge not to believe, listen and follow the instructions of the Duong Van Minh organization;*

### 5.4.2.2. Plan of the People's Committee of District Hoa An, Province Cao Bang

Based on the aforementioned Directive 18-CT/HU of the Communist Party of Hoa An District, the People's Committee of Hoa An District launched a plan with similar name, No. 49/KH-UBND on May 4, 2013<sup>46</sup>. This plan has:

- three immediate objectives:
  - *Organizing for people (16 years and older) in the hamlet to sign pledge not to believe, listen and follow the plot of Duong Van Minh organization;*
  - *Helping people to make acquaintance of, keeping in close touch with and being in intimate terms of the "Working Group to Mass Mobilization" ... assembly, training and signing engagement...*
  - *Helping people to have a domestic life which is in close touch with and integrated into the hamlets on the flat land.*
- and several long-term goals which should be reached at any price, as follows:
  - *Progressing towards the elimination of believing and following the illegal propaganda of Duong Van Minh organization;*
  - *Not organizing a birthday party for Duong Van Minh on the 9th day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar;*
  - *Not worshiping animal symbols (...) of swallow, toad and cicada that Duong Van Minh promoted;*
  - *Not skipping the worship of ancestors, grandparents per the traditional beliefs of Hmong;*
  - *Not migrating to the areas affected by "Vang Chu".*

The People's Committee of the Hoa An District would offer a variety of cultural activities and arts, provide legal advices and professional careers guidance....

These events aim to attract Hmongs and to consume their time. However, looking to the list of authorities who have to implement this plan: People's Committees, Public Security, army, committees for mass mobilization, Fatherland Front, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth

<sup>45</sup> Directive No. 18-CT/HU on "Launching a Concerted Campaign of the entire population to protect security of the fatherland to wipe out the illegal Duong Van Minh organization in Van Thu Hamlet, Nam Tuan Village" (Chỉ thị số 18-CT/HU về việc „Phát động tập trung phong trào toàn dân bảo vệ an ninh Tổ quốc (nhằm) xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp Duong Van Minh ở xóm Vãn Thụ, xã Nam Tuấn“), Standing Committee of the Communist Party in Hoa An District, February 4, 2013 (Available at VETO! Office)

<sup>46</sup> Plan No. 49/KH-UBND on "Launching a Concerted Campaign of the entire population to protect security of the fatherland to wipe out the illegal Duong Van Minh organization in Van Thu Hamlet, Nam Tuan Village" (“Kế hoạch số 49/KH-UBND về việc „Phát động tập trung phong trào toàn dân bảo vệ an ninh Tổ quốc (nhằm) xóa bỏ tổ chức bất hợp pháp Duong Van Minh ở xóm Vãn Thụ, xã Nam Tuấn“), People's Committee of Hoa An District, Cao Bang Province, May 4, 2013, 5 pages (Document available at VETO!)

Association, Women Association, Peasants Association, Veterans Association..., one would think that these events are imperative to attend and indeed it is an opportunity for the government to identify those, who do not participate in the events, are those against the government policies and against these agencies and associations.

**(See Document 3: 130504 Launching a Concerted Campaign in Van Thu Hamlet).**

It is noteworthy that the SSFO in Van Thu Village lay in this Hoa An District. It was built on May 16, 2013 and demolished it on September 28, 2013.

#### **5.4.2.3. Decision on Compulsory Measures of District Ngan Son, Bac Kan**

On November 14, 2013 the People's Committee of Ngan Son District, Bac Kan Province delivered an enforcement decision to Hoang Van Slam<sup>47</sup>, a Duong Van Minh believer, when they came to dismantle the SSFO of 7.5 square meters located on a piece of land in the Lung Lia Village, Na Phac Town, Ngan Son District, Bac Kan Province.

Slam's family has been granted the right by the Government to use the said farmland for planting since 2011. On May 16, 2013 he started building a SSFO. On May 17, 2013 the authorities stop him from proceeding on. On October 25, 2013 the Government levied him an administrative fine. On November 14, 2013 the government brought agents to the site tearing down his SSFO.

### **5.5. Two propaganda documents**

Tuyen Quang Provincial Government has distributed widely defamatory propaganda materials against Duong Van Minh religion. The H' Mong believers are indignant at the false fabrications aimed at stigmatizing and discriminating against them in society.

#### **5.5.1. Propaganda booklet in three languages**

The document entitled "*Things cadres, Party members and people need to know about the illegal Duong Van Minh organization*"<sup>48</sup>, it is an 8-page printed in color booklet, written in three languages: Vietnamese, old Hmong and new Hmong languages (**see Picture 10**). Booklets was published by the Steering Committee implementing Resolution 20 and released around June of 2013, probably aiming at Hmong cadres and public officials. Because several of them have followed Duong Van Minh religion and they do not carry out directives to suppress the Duong Van Minh religion. They probably observed that the Duong Van Minh religion has not done anything illegal at all. The documents specified above included false passages (see the first paragraph of the following quotations) with comments of believers in Tuyen Quang province<sup>49</sup> (see the second paragraph of the quotations);

*" Duong Van Minh was quoted saying: in the year 2000 the earth will explode , people will die, Duong Van Minh followers will be saved by Jesus; they will live happily in the heaven, they do not have to work for food, will become literate without learning, the dead will be resurrected, they will be young forever, ailments will be cured, Hmong will have their own country. Who*

<sup>47</sup> Enforcement decision No. 2895/QD-CC, issued by the People's Committee of Ngan Son District, Bac Kan Province on November 14, 2013 (available at VETO! Office)

<sup>48</sup> Document **Things that cadres, party members and people should know about the outlawed Dương Văn Minh organization** ("Những điều cán bộ, đảng viên và nhân dân cần biết về tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh"), Steering Committee for the implementation of the Resolution No. 20, written in Vietnamese, old and new HMong languages, June 11, 2013, 1000 copy prints

<sup>49</sup> Conversations with many Duong Van Minh believers in January and February 2014

wants to ask Duong Van Minh to offer prayers for the sick will have to bring him cash, candies, cigarettes and other things of value for the prayer service." (See page 2, *ibid.*).

Comment: The members of Duong Van Minh religion, who got in touch with Duong Van Minh have never heard such things. Mr. Duong Van Minh never required money or gifts. Hmong believers confirmed that ethnic Hmongs are Vietnamese citizens and they wanted to follow the policy of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam, and have no intention of setting up a separate country.

### 5.5.2. Propaganda booklet in Vietnamese

Another document entitled "*Outline propaganda activities to prevent illegal Duong Van Minh organization*"<sup>50</sup> distributed by the government of Tuyen Quang Province, consists of 4 pages with colored photographs (see **Picture 11**). Simple propaganda and intimidation are included. A believer of Duong Van Minh in Tuyen Quang province commented of the content of the document.<sup>51</sup>

*"Some individuals have organized illegal Duong Van Minh religion to take advantage of the trust of Hmong people to mobilize, entice and cheat them, appropriating their money, time and labor causing unsafe political, social order and safety in the local area."* (See page 1, *ibid.*).

Comment: Devotees of Duong Van Minh religion affirmed that they have never been deceived or been appropriated money from. They voluntarily contributed to the common cause, such as the construction of SSFO. The government cannot prove to the opposite in the trials. They meet and dance on Sunday, which is a day off. The ones who caused disturbance are public security officers who are always threatening and harassing them.

*"Duong Van Minh Organizations continued illegal campaigning, urging Hmongs to build funeral homes in the name of having a place for storing funeral objects. This is an action against the customs and traditions, disturbing the daily life of Hmong people in the villages and in violation of State regulations."* (See page 2, *ibid.*)

Comment: the money contributed to build SSFO are managed transparently and all are used for the purchase of materials. They believe that the procedure of burial recommended by Duong Van Minh is better than the old habits and does not disturb anyone's life.

*"The activities of illegal Duong Van Minh organization have violated the law of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the provisions of Article 258 of the Penal Code on charges of abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State. The illegal construction of the SSFO will be dismantled; who incites people to build the sheds or obstructs the dismantling of the sheds will be dealt with according to law."* (See page 3, *ibid.*)

Comment: The Duong Van Minh believers have the right to build SSFO. Order of dismantling the sheds was not justified, the rationale of the order was not explained by any level of government; they just merely imposed.

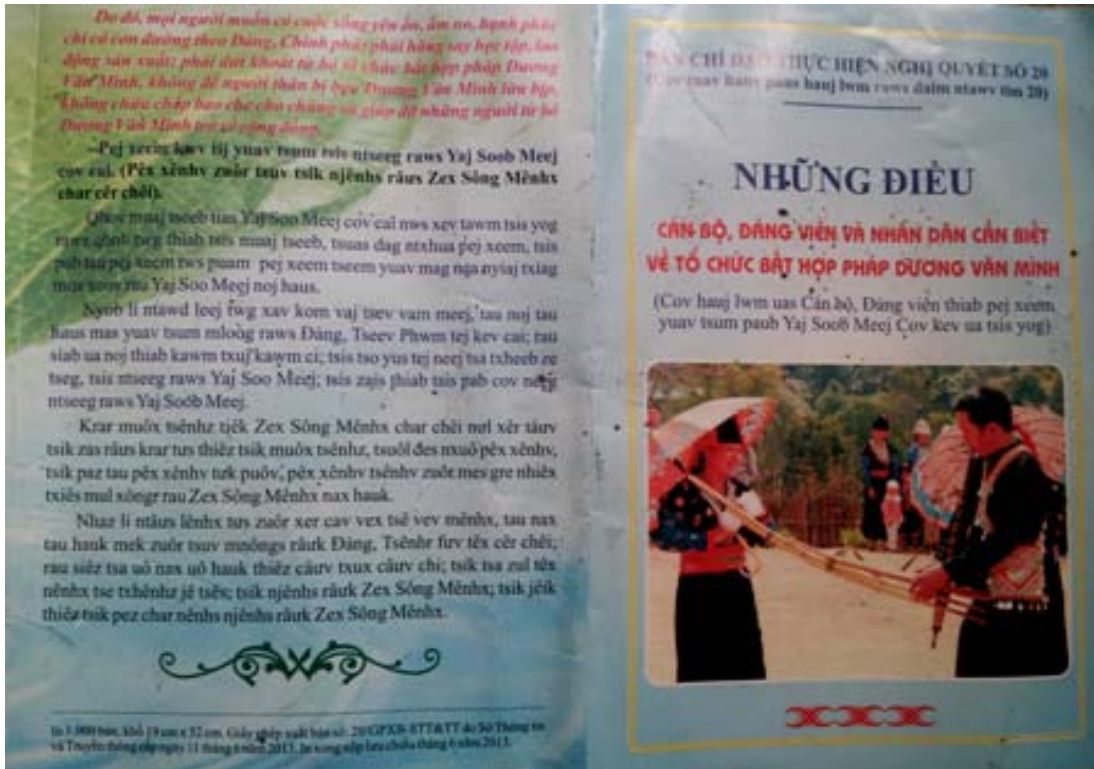
*"...Suggested: people should cooperate with the government to dismantle the sheds, and deal appropriately with those in violation of the laws. Party and State has continued to improve the care for the material and spiritual lives of ethnic minorities ..."* (see page 4, *ibid.*)

Comment: the Duong Van Minh believers informed that they do not accept the dismantlement of the SSFO per the Government's order.

<sup>50</sup> **Outline propaganda activities to prevent illegal Duong Van Minh organization** („Đề cương tuyên truyền ngăn chặn hoạt động tổ chức bất hợp pháp Dương Văn Minh“, Government of Tuyen Quang Province, September 2013

<sup>51</sup> Interview with a Duong Van Minh believer on March 1, 2014





Picture 10: Propaganda booklet “Things that cadres, party members and people should know about the outlawed Dương Văn Minh organization” (in three languages)



Picture 11: Propaganda booklet “Outline propaganda activities to prevent the illegal Dương Văn Minh organization” (Vietnamese)