

February 1, 2001: Commission Hearing on Religious-Freedom Violations in Vietnam, Indonesia

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom will hold two hearings on Tuesday, February 13 in Washington, D.C., to examine religious-freedom violations and U.S. policy in Vietnam and Indonesia. The hearings are scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 124.

BACKGROUNDIn Vietnam, the law provides for the extensive regulation of religious organizations by the state. Leaders and members of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the Hoa Hao sect of Buddhism, the Cao Dai religion, as well as Protestants and Roman Catholics have been detained without charge, imprisoned, heavily fined, harassed, or subject to house arrest or government surveillance. In Indonesia, current communal violence in the Moluccan Islands has reportedly claimed the lives of 5,000 to 8,000 Christians and Muslims since January 1999. There is evidence that the Indonesian government has not controlled its armed forces or the influx of armed Muslims from other islands, resulting in murder, forced mass resettlement, forced conversion to Islam (including involuntary circumcision), and torture. The witnesses and schedule are as follows:

9:00 - 9:15 Welcome and Introductory Remarks by Chairman Elliott Abrams
 9:15 - 10:30 Vietnam, Panel I: Situation Analysis Witnesses Zachary Abuza, Simmons College; Vo Van Ai, Buddhist Information Bureau; Huynh-Mai Nguyen, Hoa Hao Buddhist Church in the United States; Rev. Paul Ai, Former President, Evangelical Fellowship of Vietnam; Fr. Tadeus Nguyen Van Ly, Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam (invited)
 10:30 - 10:45 Break
 10:45 - 12:00 Vietnam, Panel II: U.S. Policy Options Witnesses Virginia Foote, U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council; Catharin Dalpino, Brookings Institution; Larry Wortzel, The Heritage Foundation; Carlyle Thayer, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
 12:00 - 1:15 Break
 1:15 - 2:30, Indonesia, Panel I: Situation Analysis Witnesses Paul Michael, Taylor Smithsonian Institution; Robert Hefner, Boston University; H.M. Jusuf Ely Yayasan, Jaziratul Muluk (foundation for educational, health, and humanitarian services), Ambon, Indonesia
 John Titaley, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Indonesia
 2:30 - 2:45 Break
 2:45 - 4:00 Indonesia, Panel II: U.S. Policy Options Witnesses R. William Liddle, Ohio State University; Daniel Lev, University of Washington; Sidney Jones, Human Rights Watch; Paul Gardner, Former U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea
 Hon. Elliott Abrams, Chair
 - Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vice Chair; Rabbi David Saperstein; Laila Al-Marayati, M.D.; Hon. John R. Bolton; Dean Michael K. Young; Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick; Nina Shea; Justice Charles Z. Smith; Ambassador Robert Seiple, Ex-Officio; Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director