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VIETNAM | Father Nguyen Van Ly, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, a 65 year-old Catholic priest, and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) , have been nominated for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize by U.S. Members of Congress Chris Smith and Zoe Lofgren.

Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly has been a prominent human rights' defender since the 1970s, campaigning for religious freedom, democracy and free media reporting. He is a prominent supporter of the Vietnamese democracy movement, Bloc 8406, and his outspoken work has resulted in him spending more than 15 years in prison.

In March 2007, Father Ly was sentenced to eight years imprisonment for “disseminating slanderous and libelous information” harmful to the state. He was rearrested by the Vietnamese authorities in July 2011, ending 16 months of temporary medical parole. He is partially paralyzed as a result of suffering several strokes, as well as having a brain tumor. In September 2010, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for Father Ly's immediate and unconditional release, saying that he had been arbitrarily and illegally detained and denied access to legal counsel by the Vietnamese authorities.

The Most Venerable Thich Quang Do is a Buddhist monk, human rights activist, and head of the UBCV, once the largest Buddhist organization of southern Vietnam. The UBCV and its leaders have been subject to ongoing government persecution since 1975. As a result of his outspoken attitude, Thich Quang Do spent 10 years in internal exile and was given a 5-prison sentence in 1995 for organizing a humanitarian relief mission. Despite these challenges, Thich Quang Do says the UBCV is determined to pursue its movement for human rights.

The winner of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize will be announced in mid-October.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "We welcome the nomination of Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. In fighting for freedom and human rights, both men have had their own freedom curtailed and their rights restricted, yet they persevere. We hope that their nomination will focus international attention on the Government's treatment of religious and political dissidents. CSW joins Father Ly and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do in calling on the government of Vietnam to protect and promote human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam."

