

Viet Nam

The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) is the sole political party within the country. Under the CPV there has been a history of systematic denial, in practice, of rights to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
			<u>Expression of core humanist principles on democracy, freedom or human rights is severely restricted</u>
			<u>Concerns that secular or religious authorities interfere in specifically religious freedoms</u>
<u>No condition holds in this strand</u>	<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	

Legend

Constitution and government

Key articles from the Constitution of Vietnam provide the policy direction of the CPV government, in theory.

Article 24:

1. *“Every one shall enjoy freedom of belief and of religion; he can follow any religion or follow none. All religions are equal before the law*
2. *The State respects and protects freedom of belief and of religion.*
3. *No one has the right to infringe on the freedom of belief and religion or to take advantage of belief and religion to violate the laws.”*

Article 25:

“The citizen shall enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, to access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations. The practice of these rights shall be provided by the law.”

constitutionnet.org/files/final_constitution_of_vietnam_2013-english.pdf

However, restrictions exist in policy.

The penal code, as amended in 1997, establishes penalties for vaguely defined offenses such as “attempting to undermine national unity” by promoting “division between religious believers and

nonbelievers.” The government continues to limit the organized activities of independent religious groups and of individuals who are regarded as a threat to Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) authority.

Education and children’s rights

The government does not permit religious instruction in public schools; but nor is atheism taught officially.

Family, community and society

Demography

How Vietnam’s population divides into non-religious and religious affiliation is not possible to say with certainty. ID cards contain a category for affiliation which is a poor indicator. Citizens have many reasons to deny religious affiliation. There is clearly a significant Buddhist population, perhaps 50% of the 92m people in the country. One estimate is of high numbers of atheists. The atheists are highly unlikely to have greater rights to freedom of belief, in practice, than those with a religious affiliation.

Religious restrictions

There are significant restrictions in practice on religious freedom as there are on a range of human rights organizations and other non-government agencies. Registration of organizations and agencies is the key administrative control. A surprise has been, that in 2014 the CPV decided in November to lift its ban on gay marriage and to allow Pride.

The CPV has eased some of the registration of religious organizations, in recent months, which now include 11 major religions. As an illustration of this shift, the official Vietnamese News Agency has reported a meeting to enhance bilateral ties of the Vatican with Hanoi,.

In contrast Decree 92 has been the basis of controlling both religious and human rights organizations: Decree 92 states that the “abuse” of freedom of belief or religion “to undermine the country’s peace, independence, and unity” is illegal, and religious activities may be suspended if they “negatively affect the cultural traditions of the nation.” In practice this Decree appears to be intended to protect criticism of the CPV, and government.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

In 2013, Vietnam continued its intense crackdown on free expression online, in print, and in the public. In September, the state introduced a new law, Decree 72, that restricted all websites and social media from publishing anything that “provides information that is against Vietnam,” an incredibly broad provision that could essentially permit the government to arrest any Internet user in the country.

The government tightly controls the media, silencing critics through the courts and other means of harassment. A 1999 law requires journalists to pay damages to groups or individuals found to have been harmed by press articles, even if the reports are accurate.

In 2013, the government increased its repression of print and online journalists, jailing more than twice as many writers and bloggers in 2013 as it did the previous year. In June, the government

arrested Pham Viet Dao, perhaps the best-known blogger in Vietnam, and charged him with “abusing democratic freedoms.”

Freedoms of association and assembly

Freedoms of association and assembly are tightly restricted. Organizations must apply for official permission to obtain legal status and are closely regulated and monitored by the government. A small but active community of nongovernmental groups promotes environmental conservation, land rights, women’s development, and public health.

<206.155.102.64/country,,,VNM,,53fc364d29,0.html>

Imprisonment of human rights defenders

Amnesty International demanded on 26 August 2014 that: “The arbitrary imprisonment of three human rights defenders on trumped-up charges makes a mockery of Vietnam’s human rights commitments and obligations.”

<206.155.102.64/country,,,VNM,,54256ba015,0.html>