

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 249/02 (ASA 23/006/2002, 7 August 2002) and follow-ups (ASA 23/007/2003, 19 August 2002; ASA 41/022/2003, 8 August 2003; ASA 41/029/2003, 12 September 2003) - Fear for safety/forcible return/prisoner of conscience/unfair trial

VIET NAM/CAMBODIA

Thich Tri Luc (m), Vietnamese Buddhist monk

Buddhist dissident Thich Tri Luc was allowed to leave Viet Nam on 22 June, to re-settle in a Scandinavian country. He arrived there the following day.

He had been abducted from Cambodia by Cambodian and Vietnamese agents and forcibly returned to Viet Nam in July 2002. At the time he was recognized as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). It was more than a year before his family were finally informed that he was still alive and due to face trial.

On 12 March 2004 the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City sentenced Thich Tri Luc to 20 months' imprisonment on charges of distorting "the government's policies on national unity" and contacting "hostile groups to undermine the government's internal security and foreign affairs". He was released on 26 March, having already spent 20 months' in pre-trial detention. In a hand-written note sent to Amnesty International and other human rights organizations after his release from prison he described in detail his abduction in Cambodia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thich Tri Luc, a former Buddhist monk and member of the non state-sanctioned Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV), fled from Viet Nam to Cambodia to seek asylum after suffering years of persecution by the Vietnamese authorities. He was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International on two previous occasions before he left Viet Nam in early 2002, and in between periods spent in prison was subjected to house arrest, harassment, short term detention, and deprivation of basic rights by the authorities because of his membership of the UBCV and his peaceful religious activities.

Thich Tri Luc's case was considered of vital importance and emblematic for AI campaigning and advocacy because of its focus on serious human rights violations in both Viet Nam and Cambodia: religious persecution in Viet Nam and Cambodia's failure to honour its commitments under the Refugee Convention.

No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.
