

Religious News**Regarding the Thái Hà diocese's Law-breaking Action at
178 Nguyễn Lương Bằng St., Đống Đa Dt., Hà Nội**

Recently, domestic and international media ceaselessly report on the Thái Hà diocese's law-breaking actions at 178 Nguyễn Lương Bằng St, Đống Đa Dt., Hà Nội. Domestic and international public opinion are concerned about extremist actions leading to this lawful infringement and looking for determined solutions from the law enforcement agencies to reinforce the State laws. The event began with Thái Hà diocese's petition to retake the right of use over the land at 178 Nguyễn Lương Bằng, Đống Đa, Hà Nội which the State has given the right of management for the Chiến Thắng garment joint stock company and the Cement transportation company. In order to realize the purpose, dignitaries from the diocese had mobilized and provoked hundreds parishioners at noon of the 15 August 2008 to break the brick wall, destroyed its 6 meters long then invaded the land under the Chiến Thắng company's management. This group then cut down trees, set up tents, put in statue, the cross, prayed and sang hymn thus created disorder and negative impact on the Company's production and the local residents' life. In following days, the level of lawful infringement seemed to get higher. They mobilized even the old, women, and especially children to participate into this perturbative action. Some foreign newspaper, especially electronic ones, also published papers which distorted the truth in order to stimulate parishioners to carry on law-breaking actions and stain the good repute of the State of Vietnam and the Hanoi authorities.

When the Vietnamese media were raising voices to object to this lawful infringement, on 19 August 2008, priest Vũ Khởi Phụng, the one who takes care of the soul of the parishioners in Thái Hà diocese, signed in a petition to the Prime Minister and some media agencies saying that Vietnamese media had spread false information of what had happened in this area. Even when the Hanoi authority showed them documents made and signed priest Vũ Ngọc Bích regarding the handover of this land for the State since 27 May 1963, they denied that fact and carried on their lawful violation.

When the issue became more serious, the law enforcement agencies had to take part in. On 27 August 2008, the investigative police of the Đống Đa district had issued the Decision to initiate a criminal case No. 524 with two names of crime: “destructs or intentionally vandalizes the properties” according to article No. 132 and “causes public disorder” according to article No. 245 of the Criminal laws by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam which happened on 15 August 2008 at Chiến Thắng garment joint stock company at 178 Nguyễn Lương Bằng, Đống Đa, Hà Nội. On 23 August 2008, the Decision was sent to Thái Hà diocese and related subjects. At the same day, Lê Thị Hợi born in 1947, and Lê Quang Kiện born in 1945, both are living in Đống Đa district, Hà Nội, were caught and put in detention for a period of 2 months for the purpose of investigation of crime of “vandalizing properties”. Right before the lenses of the television, Lê Thị Hợi had admitted her law-breaking action although it was too late.

On the Hanoi authorities side, functional agencies were still persistent in persuading law breakers from the Thái Hà diocese stop themselves illegal actions. These agencies also applied enforcements exactly according to current laws to deal with unlawful actions by some priests and parishioners at 178 Nguyễn Lương Bằng St., Đống Đa Dt., Hanoi.

The vice-Chairman of the Hanoi city People’s Council Vũ Công Khanh has signed the documents No. 733 UBND-NNĐC to send to all related agents in this event. The People’s Council also requires city organs to quickly take back all lands managed by said-above two companies for the tentative project of building a recreational site for all local people.

With effective and strict solutions implemented by the Hanoi authorities, hopefully priests and parishioners from Thái Hà diocese will soon realize their wrong actions and attitude so as to act according to laws, respect residents in the area and stop law-breaking actions for the purpose of “living a good religious life.”

Reporter from the *Religious Studies Review*