

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 7, 2017

Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington DC

Dear President Trump,

During your visit to Vietnam we urge you to impress upon the Communist Party leaders in Hanoi that continued expansion of economic and strategic cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam will depend on real and concrete improvements in Vietnam's dismal human rights record. A government that routinely ignores or flouts universal standards and its international commitments is unlikely to be a reliable partner on key issues such as the South China Sea and trade, issues which will no doubt feature prominently on the agenda during your visit.

Vietnam is an increasingly important trade partner, as our exports have increased nine fold over the last decade. As a Comprehensive Partner, the U.S. and Vietnam have increased cooperation in maritime security, as is evidenced by the transfer of a Hamilton-class Coast Guard cutter.

However, we are gravely concerned about the harassment, intimidation, assaults, and imprisonment of rights defenders, bloggers, and religious leaders. Basic rights in Vietnam, including freedom of religion, speech, press, and association, are severely circumscribed. Religious groups face systematic, ongoing, and egregious restrictions for seeking to organize independent of government control, and workers are not allowed to form independent unions. Torture is endemic in the Vietnamese prison system and there is no independent judiciary. The Communist Party does not allow challenges to its leadership and maintains, often brutally, its monopoly on power.

In your speech to the United Nations in September, you said that the "United States of America will stand with every person living under a brutal regime. Our respect for sovereignty is also a call for action. All people deserve a government that cares for their safety, their interests, and their well-being, including their prosperity." During your visit to Poland in July, you also stated "we value the dignity of every human life, protect the rights of every person, and share the hope of every soul to live in freedom. That is who we are."

The Vietnamese people do not have freedom and face harsh repression for standing up for human rights and democracy. Your advocacy for individual rights and the rule of law will be warmly welcomed by the Vietnamese people. Over 66% of the Vietnamese population was born after 1975 and these young people are overwhelmingly pro-American and seek the rights and liberties enjoyed by their relatives in California, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, New Jersey, and many other states where Vietnamese-Americans have flourished and become such an important part of our American fabric.

If history is a guide, your advocacy will also bring tangible results. The Vietnamese government has responded to concerns expressed by the last two administrations when human rights improvements were linked to better U.S.-Vietnam relations. Whether their goal was to gain entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), or to address U.S. concerns over violations of religious freedom, the Vietnamese government took steps toward reform when seriously pressed by past American presidents. Unfortunately, when the desired trade, investment, or security cooperation was received, the Vietnamese government abandoned these reforms without consequence. This is a trend detrimental to U.S. interests and prestige.

On your trip, and as part of a long-range effort to promote your Administration's goal of a free, stable, and open Asia-Pacific region, we urge you to develop policy approaches that intertwine U.S. human rights, economic, security, and political interests in Vietnam. As such, we hope you will prioritize the following issues during your visit that, we believe, will advance both American interests and those of the Vietnamese people.

Promote a Free Internet: Vietnam continues to have one of the world's most restrictive Internet environments, with pervasive filtering of content and the widespread arrest of activists for their online activities. Because Internet freedom is an issue that advances both American economic and human rights interests, we urge the Administration to seek an agreement with the Vietnamese government to ease Internet restrictions, develop and distribute effective technologies that provide or enhance access to the Internet for Vietnamese citizens, and seek an end to the arrests of bloggers, journalists, and pro-democracy activists for their online activity.

Focus on Religious Freedom: Countries that protect religious freedom are more prosperous, stable, and democratic; thus the severe restrictions faced by religious groups in Vietnam are detrimental to both U.S. and Vietnamese interests. We urge you and your Administration to focus on allowing independent religious organizations to operate outside of government control and to end impunity for government officials who harass, arrest, and torture independent Christians and other religious believers. To address these issues effectively, we ask that the Administration use the tools of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act.

Address the Persistent Problem of Human Trafficking: As reported by the State Department's 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report* (TIP), Vietnam remains a "source and, to a lesser extent, a destination country...for sex trafficking and forced labor." Vietnamese men and women are subject to forced labor in "rehabilitation" centers, detention centers, and prisons and, according to the TIP report, Vietnamese migrants working in "state-owned, private, or joint-stock companies" live in "situations of exploitation" in the construction, fishing, agriculture, mining, logging and manufacturing sectors in other Asian and European countries.

Emphasize Legal Reforms That Will Enhance Freedom: Vietnam is using its laws to restrict freedom of religion, expression, association, and peaceful assembly – such as the laws against "propaganda against the state" and "taking advantage of democratic freedoms to injure the national unity." Arbitrary laws, used with impunity to target those peacefully seeking reforms and

enforced by a weak judiciary, not only are a violation of universal standards but also have important implications for U.S. investments and businesses.

Seek Releases of Political & Religious Prisoners: We were encouraged by the recent release of Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh and his family and by your Administration's effort to seek their release and resettlement in the United States. Nevertheless, international human rights organizations have documented that there are more than one hundred political prisoners still detained in Vietnam. Enclosed is a list of 105 prisoners who have been convicted of crimes for taking part in peaceful protests, expressing their political beliefs, or exercising their religion. We ask that your Administration continue to focus on the release of political and religious prisoners including, among others, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, Nguyen Van Dai, Tran Thi Nga, Tran Anh Kim, Le Thanh Tung, and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

Proper Compensation for Property Confiscated from American Citizens: In 2010, the Da Nang city government, which will host the APEC Summit, forcibly expropriated land from the 142-year-old Catholic parish of Con Dau, arresting and torturing parishioners and disbanding the parish in the process. A number of the confiscated properties belonged to former residents of Con Dau who had long since become United States citizens. The Vietnamese government's expropriation of properties of U.S. citizens is a widespread phenomenon affecting potentially tens of thousands of Americans.

We strongly believe that closer relations with the United States should be incumbent upon greater respect from the Communist Party and government in Vietnam for human rights and the rule of law. A Vietnam that respects human rights and abides by the rule of law not only advances vital U.S. interests, strengthening American security and prosperity, but furthers the Vietnamese people's desire for freedom, prosperity, and justice.

We look forward to working with you on this serious and prompt matter.

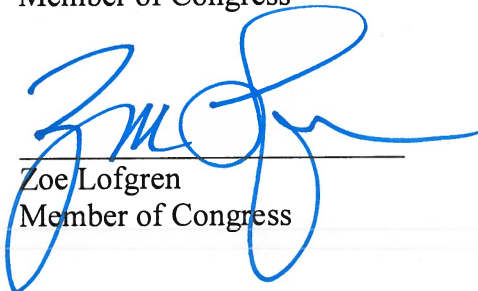
Sincerely,



Christopher Smith
Member of Congress



Edward R. Royce
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Steve Chabot

Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Robert Pittenger

Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress

Bill Posey

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Keith Rothfus

Keith Rothfus
Member of Congress

Roger Williams

Roger Williams
Member of Congress

David Price

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Dana Rohrabacher

Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Joe Barton

Joe Barton
Member of Congress

Sam Johnson

Sam Johnson
Member of Congress

Pete Sessions

Pete Sessions
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Enclosures:

List of political and religious prisoners in Vietnam.

Prisoners of Conscience
Provided by Human Rights Watch

1. Phan Kim Khánh, born 1993
2. Nguyễn Văn Oai, born 1981
3. Trần Thị Nga, born 1977
4. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh (a.k.a Mẹ Năm), born 1979
5. Rơ Ma Đai (Ama Pôn) born 1989
6. Puih Bop (Ama Phun), born 1959
7. Ksor Kam (Ama H'Trum), born 1965
8. Rơ Lan Kly (Ama Blan), born 1962
9. Đinh Nông (Bả Pol), born 1965
10. Trần Anh Kim, born 1949
11. Lê Thanh Tùng, born 1968
12. Cán Thị Thêu, born 1962
13. Ksor Phit, born 1970
14. Siu Đik, born 1970
15. Nguyễn Hữu Quốc Duy, born 1985
16. Ksor Púp (Ama Hyung)
17. Siu Đoang, born 1983
18. A Jen, born 1984
19. A Tik, born 1952
20. Đinh Kữ, born 1972
21. Thin, born 1979
22. Gyum, born 1980
23. Nguyễn Đình Ngọc (a.k.a Nguyễn Ngọc Già), born 1966
24. Ngô Thị Minh Ước, born 1959
25. Nguyễn Hữu Vinh (a.k.a Ba Sàm), born 1956
26. Nguyễn Tiến Thịnh
27. Hoàng Văn Thu
28. Nguyễn Lê Châu Bình
29. Nguyễn Văn Thông, born 1965
30. Kpuih Khuông
31. Rmah Khil
32. Rmah Bloanh
33. A Kuin (a.k.a Bả Chăn), born 1974
34. Ngự (a.k.a Bả Săn), born 1972
35. Điều B'ré (a.k.a Bạp Bum), born 1969
36. Điều By O, born 1967
37. Đinh Yum, born 1963
38. Rơ Mah Plă (a.k.a Rmah Blă; a.k.a Ama Em), born 1968
39. Siu Tinh (a.k.a Ama Khâm), born 1978
40. Rum
41. Chi
42. Đinh Lý
43. Đinh Ngo

44. Thạch Thuol, born 1985
45. Ngô Hào, born 1948
46. A Tách (a.k.a Bả Hlôl), born 1959
47. Rung, born 1979
48. Jonh (a.k.a Chinh), born 1952
49. A Hyum (a.k.a Bả Kôl), born 1940
50. Byuk, born 1945
51. Đinh Lứ, born 1976
52. Đinh Hrôn, born 1981
53. Đinh Nguyên Kha, born 1988
54. Phan Văn Thu, born 1948
55. Lê Duy Lộc, born 1956
56. Vương Tấn Sơn, born 1953
57. Đoàn Đình Nam, born 1951
58. Nguyễn Kỳ Lạc, born 1951
59. Tạ Khu, born 1947
60. Từ Thiện Lương, born 1950
61. Võ Ngọc Cư, born 1951
62. Võ Thành Lê, born 1955
63. Võ Tiết, born 1952
64. Lê Phúc, born 1951
65. Đoàn Văn Cư, born 1962
66. Nguyễn Dinh, born 1968
67. Phan Thanh Ý, born 1948
68. Đỗ Thị Hồng, born 1957
69. Trần Phi Dũng, born 1966
70. Lê Đức Động, born 1983
71. Lê Trọng Cư, born 1966
72. Lương Nhật Quang, born 1987
73. Nguyễn Thái Bình, born 1986
74. Trần Quân, born 1984
75. Phan Thanh Tường, born 1987
76. Hồ Đức Hòa, born 1974
77. Nguyễn Đặng Minh Mẫn, born 1985
78. Tráng A Chớ, born 1985
79. Kpuil Mel
80. Kpuil Lẽ
81. Siu Thái (a.k.a Ama Thương), born 1978
82. Phạm Thị Phượng, born 1945
83. Trần Thị Thúy, born 1971
84. Siu Hlôm, born 1967
85. Siu Nheo, born 1955
86. Siu Brom, born 1967
87. Rah Lan Mlih, born 1966
88. Rơ Mah Pró, born 1964
89. Rah Lan Blom, born 1976

90. Kpă Sinh, born 1959
 91. Rơ Mah Klít, born 1946
 92. Nguyễn Hoàng Quốc Hùng, born 1981
 93. Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, born 1966
 94. Rmah Hlach (a.k.a Ama Blut), born 1968
 95. Siu Koch (a.k.a Ama Liên), born 1985
 96. Nhi (a.k.a Bả Tiên), born 1958
 97. Siu Ben (a.k.a Ama Yôn)
 98. Rơ Lan Jú (a.k.a Ama Suit)
 99. Noh, born 1959
 100. Rôh, born 1962
 101. Pinh, born 1967
 102. Siu Wiu
 103. Brong, born 1964
 104. Y Kur BĐáp
 105. Y Jim Êban
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