

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 6, 2015

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In a few days you will meet with the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong. As you well know, Mr. Trong is not a head of state nor leader of an elected government. He has been invited to the White House simply because he sits at the top of Vietnam's one party system. This authoritarian one-party system is the root cause of the deplorable human rights situation in Vietnam.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations. As members of Congress, we welcome warmer ties with the people of Vietnam and recognize the economic and security potential of that country. Accordingly, we are serious about placing human rights at the forefront of the bilateral relationship as any comprehensive partnership must be grounded in universal values and respect for international standards.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the UN Convention Against Torture. It chose to make a commitment to the principles of universal human rights. However, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) has determined that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam continues to systematically arrest and detain Vietnamese social and political activists, violating its clear obligations under international law.

As the list of detained Vietnamese bloggers and prisoners of conscience gets longer and longer, it is more important than ever that the United States sends a clear message to the Hanoi authorities that respect for human rights is essential for a closer economic and security relationship.

We recommend that you bring attention to the mistreatment of political and religious prisoners in Vietnam--especially those serving long prison sentences for their peaceful expression and political advocacy. We strongly urge you to call on Mr. Trong to immediately release prominent citizen journalists/human rights defenders including: Ho Duc Hoa, Dang Xuan Dieu, Nguyen Dang Minh Man, Ta Phong Tan, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, Ngo Hao, Tran Thi Thuy, Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung Nguyen Cong Chinh and Fr. Nguyen Van Ly.

We also recommend that you raise the critical role of independent political and social organizations in a modern society and raise troubling religious freedom violations. Mr. Trong should be encouraged to listen to the Vietnamese people and show respect for civil society, religious groups, and political freedom in Vietnam.

We look forward to working with the administration to support our nation's tradition of supporting human rights and democracy.

Respectfully,



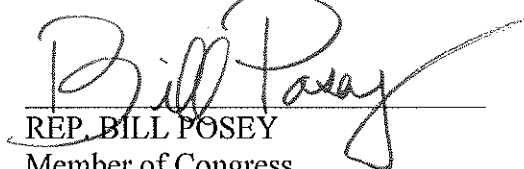
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REP. LORETTA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress



REP. JEFF FORTENBERRY
Member of Congress



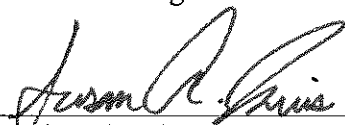
REP. BILL POSEY
Member of Congress



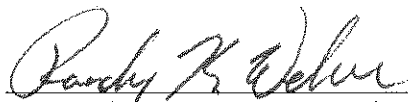
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