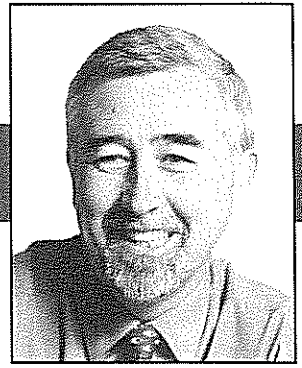


Gary Humphries



Senator for the ACT

148 Bunda Street Canberra ACT 2601
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The Honourable Nguyen Tan Dung
Prime Minister
Socialist Republic of Vietnam
2 Hoang Van Thu
Hanoi, Vietnam

Dear Prime Minister,

As a signatory to the International Covenant on civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Vietnam is expected to respect and uphold the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and fair trial.

Also, as a Chair of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Vietnam is expected to lead by example, with integrity and transparency, in order to improve the implementation of the ASEAN Charter.

The truth, however, does not suggest that this is happening. Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code which criminalises 'propaganda' against the Government is in direct conflict with the ICCPR, and has been utilised to arrest and deter peaceful democratic activists. A number of cases of which I am aware include:

Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, 49, a novelist and journalist who was actively involved in anti-corruption campaigns, was arrested in October 2009 on her way to support fellow activists facing trial. She was sentenced to three-and-a-half years imprisonment.

Pham Thanh Nghien, 33, a cyber activist and member of Bloc 8406, a pro-democracy network of human rights defenders, was arrested in September 2008 after criticising government policies and petitioning to hold a peaceful demonstration. She is now serving a four-year sentence followed by three years of house arrest.

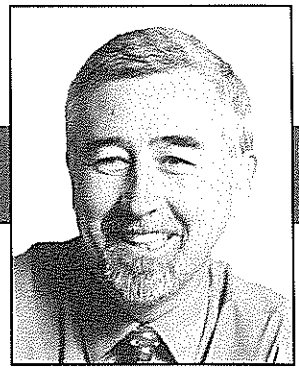
Le Thi Cong Nhan, 31, a human rights lawyer, was charged with disseminating 'propaganda' against the state. She was sentenced to three years imprisonment and is currently under house arrest.

Fr Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly, 63, A Roman Catholic Priest, whose cause and mission are for freedom of expression and religious belief. He was charged with dissent and faced a fifteen year prison sentence. Only recently was he temporarily released for medical treatment after suffering three strokes whilst in prison.

I understand that these are only a few of many cases of dissidents who are presently being imprisoned for peacefully expressing their political views. I condemn these arbitrary convictions and respectfully call on the Vietnamese government to immediately and unconditionally release all currently imprisoned activists.

Experience that counts for Canberra

Gary Humphries



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Vietnam has immense potential in furthering its progress and I believe that this will be achieved only if freedom of expression and political belief and upheld and respected.

Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Humphries', written over a horizontal line.

Gary Humphries
Senator for the ACT
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families, Housing and Human Services
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship

21 April 2010

Experience that counts for Canberra