

Parliamentary Office

Room 137, West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel: 613-992-6535
Fax: 613-992-7764



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Constituency Office

40 Centennial Parkway North
Suite 2
Hamilton, Ontario
L8E 1H6
Tel: 905-662-4763
Fax: 905-662-2285

Wayne Marston

Member of Parliament for Hamilton East – Stoney Creek

His Excellency Nguyen Tan Dung
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Embassy of Vietnam
470 Wilbrod Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N1

Dear Prime Minister Dung:

We are writing to express our serious concerns regarding the Government of Vietnam's continuous arrests of human rights activists and to urge you to take immediate action to ensure their release.

We congratulate Vietnam's positive economic development in the post-WTO accession era. But surely, the significance of human rights should be a parallel priority to Vietnam's economic development.

It has come to our attention that Vietnam now holds in its cells many political prisoners whose only crime was to peacefully advocate for social justice and equality. We are especially alarmed to hear of renowned and celebrated writer and activist Tran Khai Thanh Thuy's continued imprisonment even after repeated calls from international human rights organizations for her release.

The new directive to require Internet cafes and all commercial establishments in Hanoi to install server-side monitoring software is alarming and brings about concerns of an Internet clampdown.

Likewise, the advocacy of environment activists concerning the country's development policies regarding bauxite has been met with website shutdowns and arrests.

We therefore respectfully request the Vietnamese government to take these steps:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release imprisoned democracy activists such as Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, Pham Thanh Nghien, Le Cong Dinh, and all other peaceful bloggers and human rights activists.

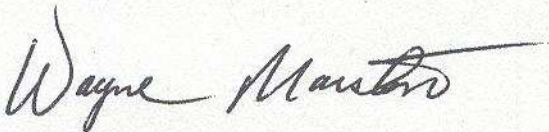
2. Rescind Decision 15, the regulation requiring all retail Internet locations to install a server-side application to block access to websites and track user activities. The implementation of this regulation is an affront to global free expression and an open Internet.

3. Advocate for development policies that make environmental sense and invite input from all parts of Vietnamese society. At a meeting of international donors in Vietnam last summer, Ambassadors drew attention to the risks of bauxite mining. We applaud this and hope that there will be a sustained effort to question ill-conceived development policies.

As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Vietnam is expected to respect and uphold civil and political rights of individuals, including the most basic of rights -- freedoms of speech, press, expression, religion, and assembly.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Wayne Marston, M.P.
Hamilton East – Stoney Creek
NDP Human Rights Critic



Paul Dewar, M.P.
Ottawa Centre
NDP Foreign Affairs Critic