



Bernie

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR OXLEY

MP

"Your Strong
Community
Voice"



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Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Vietnam

1 June 2010

The Honorable 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 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 attest to the aforementioned. Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code which criminalises "propaganda" against the Government is in direct conflict of the ICCPR, and has been utilized to arrest and squelch peaceful democratic activists. A number of cases of which we are 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 3.5 years imprisonment.



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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 criticizing government policies and petitioning to hold a peaceful demonstration. She is now serving a 4-year sentence followed by 3 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 3 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 8 year prison sentence. Only recently was he temporarily released for medical treatment after suffering from three strokes whilst in prison.

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

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

Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

Yours sincerely,

BERNIE RIPOLL