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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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September 30, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

As you prepare to meet with Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Pham Gia Khiem on Thursday, October 1, 2009, I would like to urge you to address the deteriorating human rights situation in Vietnam with Foreign Minister Khiem.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. However, the Vietnamese government continues to detain and imprison Vietnamese citizens for exercising rights that are guaranteed under the UN Declaration. According to Human Rights Watch, the Government of Vietnam failed to comply with 45 recommendations raised by the UN Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review including lifting internet and blogging controls on privately owned media and allowing individuals to promote human rights.

I find it appalling that a country which blatantly acts in disregard to the UN Declaration will be acting as President of the UN Security Council in October. I request that you strongly urge the Government of Vietnam to meet its obligations to the UN and its people by upholding the basic principles of the UN - respect for human rights.

On September, 27, 2009, the police in Vietnam assaulted over 130 monks and removed them from the Bat Nha Monastery before destroying it, a blatant violation of individuals' right to freedom of religion. Also, recently, the following eight activists were imprisoned and are currently facing "propaganda against the socialist state" charges: Nguyen Xuan Nghia (writer), Ngo Quynh (university student), Nguyen Manh Son (former communist party member), Nguyen Van Tinh (essayist), Nguyen Van Tuc (land rights activist), Nguyen Kim Nhan (electrician), Vu Hung (high school teacher), and Pham Van Troi

(engineer). On September 24, 2009, relatives of these dissidents appealed to the UN to directly intervene and request that the Government of Vietnam abide by UN human rights conventions by stopping the repression of political dissidents and releasing their relatives. The ongoing imprisonment of these peaceful activists is a worrisome sign that the Vietnamese government is not committed to protecting human rights or honoring their responsibilities as a member of the UN.

I strongly urge you to speak out on behalf of not only these eight individuals but the citizens of Vietnam who are denied their rights to freedom of speech, expression and religion on a daily basis. The United States must establish clear policies demonstrating that it is unacceptable for the Government of Vietnam to deny people their rights. I appreciate your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,


Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Michael Michalak, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam