

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 28, 2010

His Excellency Nguyễn Minh Triết
President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
c/o Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
1233 20 Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

Dear President Triết:

We are writing to convey our serious concern regarding the detention and upcoming trials of Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien and Ms. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, two prominent human rights activists. We request that the Vietnamese government act in a manner consistent with its own legal obligations and international law, and release these individuals immediately and without prejudice.

Based on information from the U.S. Department of State and international human rights organizations, it appears that the charges against Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien and Ms. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy are seriously flawed. Both women have consistently championed human rights in Vietnam, including freedom of expression and association. For those activities, they are now facing possible prison sentences.

Our understanding is that Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien is scheduled to go on trial this Friday, January 29, 2010 for "propagandizing against the state." She was reportedly arrested by Vietnamese security officials in September 2008 and we have been told that her family has not been allowed to visit her in prison since her arrest.

We understand that writer and activist Ms. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, who attempted to attend the trials of other democracy activists, is facing trial on February 5, 2010. She has reportedly had no contact with her family since her detention in October 2009. In addition, there has been no confirmation that medications supplied to the police to treat her diabetes and tuberculosis have been delivered.

According to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a party, all citizens enjoy freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the right of association. Both your Constitution and the ICCPR also guarantee criminal defendants the presumption of innocence, the right to present a defense and the right to counsel. The imminent trials of Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien and Ms. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy appear to starkly contradict these principles.

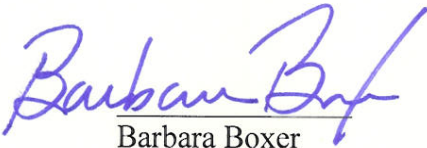
We therefore respectfully request that the Vietnamese government immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Pham Thanh Nghien and Ms. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy and that while in detention, authorities take all measures to guarantee their physical and psychological security

and well being, including access to medication and independent medical assistance and visits from family and friends.


Universal rights must be upheld for all people. It is time for Vietnam to allow its citizens to fully exercise the internationally recognized rights of freedom of assembly, expression, association and religion without fear of retribution from their government.

We will be forwarding a copy of this letter to United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important and time sensitive matter.

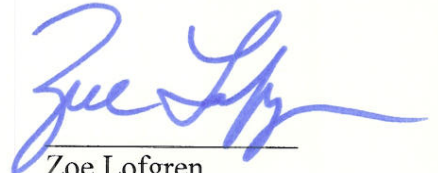
Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

cc. The Honorable Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
The Honorable Le Cong Phung, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the United States