



**Parliament of Australia**  
The Senate

11 December 2009

The Hon Stephen Smith MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Re: Human Rights in Vietnam**

Dear Stephen,

I recently had the pleasure of meeting representatives from Viet Tan Australia and the Vietnamese Community in Australia to discuss the deterioration of human rights in Vietnam.

Issues covered included the arresting of Human Rights and Democracy activists including that of writer *Tran Khai Thanh Thuy* who was imprisoned by Vietnamese authorities in October 2009.

There have been dozens of arrests since September 2008 as part of a crackdown on peaceful dissent. This goes against Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Vietnam is a signatory.

Both groups have asked that I make representations on their behalf to the Australian Government requesting the Vietnamese government

- a) allow these political prisoners the right to visitation by relatives
- b) the immediate release of these prisoners

The Vietnamese Community in Australia have also proposed

- a) that Australian consulate officials visit the prisoners and/or their relatives in Vietnam
- b) the Human Rights Dialogue officials regularly report the Human Rights Sub-Committee
- c) the temporary suspension of the Human Rights Technical Cooperation aid program

I have attached the VCA's policy proposals for your perusal and comment.

I would appreciate being updated on the progress of Australia's efforts towards resolving these human rights issues as well as a response to the proposals listed above.

Thank you for taking the time to look into this issue, I look forward to receiving a response soon.

Warm regards

**MARK FURNER**  
**SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND**

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