

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2019

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

c/o Embassy of Vietnam
1730 M Street, N.W., # 501
Washington DC, 20036

Dear Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc,

We write to express our deep concerns over the increasing government crackdown and harsh imprisonment of peaceful human right activists in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

As you know, in the last four decades, Vietnam has seek to build strong bilateral ties with the United States. We believe that a closer relationship between the United States and Vietnam requires the strong protection of human rights. The recent harsh sentences by your government against peaceful individuals exercising their basic freedoms and human rights are damaging the prospect for a closer relationship. These actions must end now.

We request the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to improve its human rights record by immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience, including but not limited to the following individuals:

1. Mr. Michael Nguyen, an American citizen (sentenced to 12 years in prison)
2. Mr. Le Dinh Luong (sentenced to 20 years in prison)
3. Mr. Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (sentenced to 16 years in prison)
4. Mr. Chau Van Kham, an Australian citizen (sentenced to 12 years in prison)
5. Mr. Hoang Duc Binh (sentenced to 14 years in prison)
6. Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen (sentenced to 11 years in prison)
7. Mr. Nguyen Van Vien (sentenced to 10 years in prison)
8. Mr. Tran Van Quyen (sentenced to 10 years in prison)
9. Mr. Nguyen Van Hoa (sentenced to 7 years of in prison)
10. Mr. Nguyen Van Oai (sentenced to 5 years in prison)
11. Dr. Ho Van Hai (sentenced to 4 years in prison)
12. Ms. Huynh Thi To Nga (held without trial)


These individuals have been arbitrarily arrested, tried, and harshly sentenced for simply exercising their basic rights to peaceful expressions and activities. Their continued imprisonment is the road block to a closer relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam.

The United States Congress is not alone in its assessment of Vietnam human rights conditions. In a joint NGO letter to the Members of the European Parliament, on November 4, 2019, fifteen Vietnamese and international civil society organizations urged the European Parliament to postpone its consent to the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) until certain human rights benchmarks are met by the Vietnamese government. This letter expressed concerns that "The rights to free expression, opinion, association and assembly remain strictly curtailed and the judiciary is under tight state control, as are the press, civil society, and religious groups. Any expression of dissent is harshly punished by state authorities, either directly or through state-sponsored thugs. Hundreds of human rights, environmental or labour activists, lawyers, religious figures and bloggers have been convicted or otherwise detained for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, in application of a draconian penal code which explicitly criminalises criticising the government."


As Members of Congress, we have followed closely the detention and imprisonment of human rights activists. Should the deterioration of human rights in Vietnam continues, we believe it is time for the Congress to review Vietnam's preferential trade status with the United States.


We believe that Vietnam will benefit when its citizens can freely express their views and exercise their basic human rights, as guaranteed by Vietnam's Constitution and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Vietnam is a signatory. We stand ready to support a deeper bilateral relationship with Vietnam in which basic human rights are respected.

Sincerely,


Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

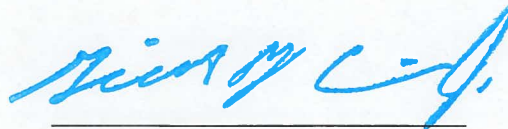

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress


J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

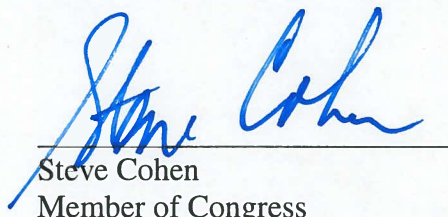

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