

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 25, 2020

His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc  
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
16 Le Hong Phong Street, Ba Dinh District  
Ha Noi, Viet Nam

Dear Prime Minister Phuc,

This past July marked twenty-five years since the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. Since then, our two nations have deepened our cultural and economic ties, with over \$70 billion in bilateral trade in 2019. At the same time, the United States remains deeply concerned about human rights in Vietnam, and recent crackdowns against journalists, writers, and bloggers contradict the commitments Vietnamese officials have made to protect the rights of their citizens.

We understand that nearly a dozen dissidents have been detained in recent months, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The arrested individuals in these cases had written or shared information on topics including Vietnam's territorial sovereignty, corruption, and human rights, and have been charged by your government under Article 117, for making, storing, and spreading "anti-state" information and material.

Among those arrested are dissidents like Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Tran Duc Thach, members of the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam and the Brotherhood for Democracy, respectively. Land rights activists Trinh Ba Phuong, his mother Can Thi Theu, and younger brother Trinh Ba Tu, who reported on the police raid of Dong Tam village in early January, have also been arrested. There are additional reports that several prominent activists have been arrested and sentenced to up to five years in prison for Facebook posts critical of the government.

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Vietnam has committed to protecting basic individual freedoms. Furthermore, Vietnam's constitution enshrines freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of association. These arrests raise concerns about the suppression of civil society organizations and human rights activists in Vietnam ahead of the 13<sup>th</sup> Vietnamese Communist Party Congress, scheduled for early 2021.

We call on the Vietnamese government to:

- Immediately release citizen journalists and bloggers Nguyen Tuong Thuy, Tran Duc Thach, Trinh Ba Phuong, Can Thi Theu, and Trinh Ba Tu.

- Release all prisoners of conscience, especially those with egregiously long prison sentences such as Le Dinh Luong (20 years), Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (16 years), Hoang Duc Binh (14 years), United States citizen Michael Nguyen (12 years), Australian citizen Chau Van Kham (12 years), Nguyen Bac Truyen (11 years), and Nguyen Van Hoa (7 years).
- Allow independent journalists to report on the oppression of bloggers, social media activists, and citizen journalists, and cease the persecution of individuals for exercising their right to freedom of speech.
- Uphold basic rights and freedoms as enshrined in Vietnam's Constitution, including freedom of speech, press, and association.
- Uphold Vietnam's obligation as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to honor basic individual rights and freedoms.

We believe that relations between the United States and Vietnam will be strengthened when Vietnamese citizens can exercise their basic human rights and express their views and beliefs freely, without fear of persecution. We stand ready to work with you to deepen the bilateral ties of our two countries.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Waters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maxine" and last name "Waters" clearly distinguishable.

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress