

August 17, 2021

The Honorable Kamala Harris

The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Harris,

Your trip to Southeast Asia comes at a vital time as several countries in that region are battling the worst outbreak of the pandemic since it started.

The United States' effort to provide safe vaccines to Vietnam will help increase the number of people who are vaccinated and reduce the spread of the virus. While we deeply appreciate this help and urge for more vaccines donated to Vietnam, such efforts must be matched with assurances that the vaccination is equitable and transparent.

We also have grave concerns about the overall human rights situation in Vietnam. During the pandemic, the Vietnamese government [detained over 50](#) bloggers, journalists, and human rights defenders. At the beginning of 2021, three members of the Independent Journalist Association of Vietnam were sentenced to [long prison terms](#).

The United States has learned how quickly COVID-19 can spread, particularly [in prisons](#). It is a humanitarian concern when the Vietnamese authorities are increasing the arrests of human rights defenders and placing them in unhygienic, confined places.

To make sure the US efforts to support vaccination in Vietnam can effectively reduce the spread of COVID-19, we strongly recommend that you urge the Vietnamese authorities to:

- **Ensure equitable and free distribution of vaccines.** The vaccination program must be based on transparent criteria, prioritizing at-risk groups rather than those with political connections or ability to pay bribes.
- **Respect freedom of speech and access to information.** Misinformation during a pandemic prolongs the recovery process, yet Vietnamese state media has not been forthcoming about how dangerous the conditions are in Vietnam. [Doctors and volunteers](#) have organized online to fill in the information gap. Their work should be respected and encouraged instead of being a cause for interrogation and arrest by the Vietnamese authorities.
- **Release citizen journalists and human rights defenders from prison.** The continued detainment of prisoners of conscience runs counter to Vietnam's stated commitment to respect international norms on human rights. In a pandemic, the safety of these activists is

further threatened. The Vietnamese government must immediately release all political prisoners, including: **Can Thi Theu, Chau Van Kham, Pastor Dinh Diem, Dinh Thi Thu Thuy, Do Nam Trung, Ho Duc Hoa, Huynh To Nga, Le Dinh Luong, Le Huu Minh Tuan, Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, Pham Chi Dung, Pham Doan Trang, Pham Thanh, Phan Van Thu, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, Tran Thi Xuan, Pastor Y Yich.**

As Vietnamese Americans, we applaud the Administration's commitment to advance human rights. This is the opportunity for the United States to stand with the people of Vietnam, defend human rights, and demand the Vietnamese government uphold the fundamental freedom and rights of its citizens, especially during the pandemic.

Respectfully,

Nguyen Thanh Ha, *Coordinating Chair*
Assembly for Democracy in Viet Nam

Nguyen Tuong Thuoc, *President*
Association of Former Political Prisoners - New Jersey

Nguyen Quy, *President*
Association of Former Political Prisoners - Stockton, California

Nguyen Phi, *Representative*
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Tran Tuan Kiet, *Organizing Chair*
Benefit Concert for Vietnamese Patriots - Stockton, California

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The Venerable Thich Dang Phap
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Do Phu, *Attorney*
Do Phu & Anh Tuan, PLC

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Florida Viet Bao Newspaper

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The Former Cadets of Dalat Political War College - Northeast Region of America

Paul Hanh Nguyen, *President*
Free Vietnamese Organization in Hawaii

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Thao Duc Tu, *President*
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Hien Duong, *President*
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