



CHRIS HAYES MP

Federal Member for Fowler
Chief Opposition Whip

Ref: GL
4 February 2022

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I write regarding Mr Van Kham Chau, who as you know has been imprisoned in Vietnam for 3 years and is now 72 years old. His wife and two sons continue to advocate for his release but have not been able to speak to him since his imprisonment. I attach for your reference, a letter written by his wife, Mrs Quynh Trang Chau, urging for Mr Chau's release.

Whilst I appreciate that Mr Chau's case has always been politically sensitive, and that the Australian Government has provided occasional consular support to him, more must be done to secure his release.

I note that human rights activists such as Nguyen Van Dai and Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (Mother Mushroom) have had similar cases in which they have been charged and convicted but subsequently exiled from Vietnam, owing to strong advocacy from host nations. US citizen Michael Nguyen was similarly charged and convicted of a 12 year jail sentence to the same prison as Mr Chau, but was then released owing to the actions of the US State Department. Yet Mr Chau remains in prison as a political example because of his affiliation with the Australian branch of Viet Tan.

Mr Chau's family are increasingly concerned about his welfare, particularly given his age and ongoing health problems. The ongoing COVID-19 situation in Vietnam has only exacerbated these concerns. The fact that Mr Chau remains imprisoned is disheartening for both Mr Chau's family and the wider Vietnamese community.

In light of the above and for the sake of Mr Chau and his family, it would be greatly appreciated if you could take an active interest in expediting his release.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Hayes'.

Chris Hayes MP

22 January 2022

**Re: Please save my husband and Australian citizen – Van Kham Chau
– currently imprisoned in Vietnam**

Dear Madam/Sir,

As you may have known, my husband Van Kham Chau – a long-term Australian citizen who is now 72 years old – has been charged with terrorism and sentenced to 12 years in prison in Vietnam despite his peaceful human rights activities.

My family and I are devastated with his unfair and harsh sentence. Despite ongoing strong efforts from our family, the Vietnamese community in Australia, and other national and international organisations to save him over the past 3 years, my husband remains imprisoned. DFAT confirmed that my husband's case was raised at the ministerial level with the Vietnamese counterpart in April 2021. While I am grateful for this support, I have not been aware of any further strong action undertaken by the Australian government to save my husband.

Australia's latest consular visit to meet my husband in prison took place 9 months ago in April 2021, as no further visit has been allowed so far due to the recent serious COVID outbreak in Vietnam. The DFAT report regarding this visit confirmed that my husband shared the same cell with other 11 foreigners, and was only permitted 5-minute domestic monthly phone call to the family in Vietnam. DFAT also noted that the presence of prison officials during the consular visit may have affected my husband's willingness to speak freely.

To deal with my husband's ongoing medical problems (most seriously, prostate), a regular supply of relevant medication is required. Currently I have been posting such medication to him monthly from Australia. He also does not have any regular health check for his health problems while in prison.

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated our stress and fear that our family and I will not be able to see him again. Therefore, I am writing this letter to seek your urgent support and interventions to facilitate my husband's immediate release and deportation to Australia.

Please help to save my beloved husband, as he is a friendly person who always wants to help and do better things for other people. My family and I miss him so much, as it has been 3 years since he was away and endures a prisoner's life. Thank you for your support and compassion.

Sincerely yours,



Quynh Trang Chau