



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

January 28, 2022

Honorable Marc Knapper
U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam

Dear Ambassador Knapper,

We write to congratulate you on your confirmation and swearing-in as United States Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and we look forward to working with you on many important issues relating to US-Vietnam relations. We also want to bring to your attention the deplorable human rights record of the Vietnamese government.

Four decades after the end of the Vietnam War and more than twenty-five years after the establishment of bilateral relations with the United States, Vietnam remains a deeply repressive regime. The Vietnamese Communist government continues to deny fundamental freedoms and basic human rights to its citizens, contrary to the values enshrined in the Vietnamese Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has promised to uphold. Citizens, dissidents, and independent journalists who exercise basic civil and political rights such as freedom of speech, association, religion, and peaceful assembly face harassment, violence, arrest, and imprisonment by the authoritarian regime.

In the past two years, while the world battles the ongoing COVID pandemic, the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam increased its crackdown on activists and dissidents with arrests, shamed trials, and long prison sentences. In releasing its World Report 2022, Human Rights Watch's Asia director Phil Robertson described the situation as: "the government seems to want to wipe out the growing dissident movement with devastating prison sentences before the world starts paying attention again." The world and the United States simply cannot ignore what's happening in Vietnam.

In 2021 alone, the Vietnamese authorities have imprisoned at least 63 people for simply expressing their opinions or affiliating themselves with groups deemed hostile to the government, according to Human Rights Watch. Increasingly, people who express criticisms against the Vietnamese government on social media are routinely harassed, monitored, and detained. It is alarming that the Vietnamese authorities are using social media content such as Facebook posts, comments, and YouTube videos as evidence in fabricated charges against activists and dissidents. The United States must ensure that American companies such as Facebook, YouTube, and others do not become repression tools of the Vietnamese government.

In writing this letter to you, we are deeply concerned about the jailed activists and dissidents in Vietnam. Their names and prison sentences are:

- Democracy activist **Tran Huynh Duy Thuc** (16 years)
- Religious freedom activist **Nguyen Bac Truyen** (11 years)
- Journalist and Radio Free Asia contributor **Nguyen Van Hoa** (7 years)
- Prominent blogger **Pham Doan Trang** (9 years)
- Environment justice activist **Le Dinh Luong** (20 years)
- Journalist and Radio Free Asia contributor **Truong Duy Nhat** (10 years)
- Land rights activists **Can Thi Theu** (8 years) and her two sons, **Trinh Ba Phuong** (10 years), **Trinh Ba Tu** (8 years)
- Land rights activist **Nguyen Thi Tam** (6 years)
- Democracy activist **Do Nam Trung** (10 years in prison)
- Writer **Pham Chi Thanh** (5.5 years)
- Independent political candidate **Le Trong Hung** (5 years)
- **Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, and Le Huu Minh Tuan**, who are members of the *Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam* (sentenced to between 11 and 15 years in prison);
- **Truong Chau Huu Danh, Doan Kien Giang, Le The Thang, Nguyen Phuoc Trung Bao, and Nguyen Thanh Nha**, all independent journalists of the Facebook group *Clean Newspaper (Bao Sach)*, sentenced to between 2 and 4.5 years in prison.
- Australian American and human rights activist **Chau Van Kham** (12 years)

This is only a partial list of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam and we urge you to raise their cases with the highest levels of the Vietnamese government and press for their immediate release.

We understand Vietnam and the United States are seeking to build a closer strategic relationship, amidst China's growing aggressions in Vietnam's East Sea (South China Sea). Such a relationship, however, cannot come at the expense of human rights and values that the international community upholds. We believe Vietnam can be a stronger and more reliable partner to the United States when it respects democratic values and the fundamental freedoms of its citizens.

As you begin serving as our Ambassador, we urge you to raise human rights issues with all levels of the Vietnamese government, demand an end to crackdowns against activists, dissidents, and independent religious institutions, as well as press for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. We wish you the best in serving as our top diplomat in Vietnam and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



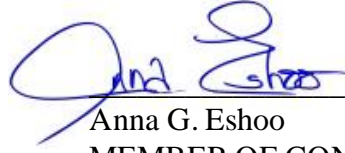
Alan Lowenthal
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Zoe Lofgren
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



J. Luis Correa
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



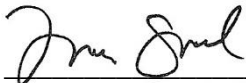
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